

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 9

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A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 9, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

36 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 9

The Altar of Earth and Steps to the Altar

BROUGHT out of Egypt, borne on eagles' wings, led to Mount Sinai, permitted to hear the voice of God speaking to them, a privilege accorded to no other people before or since, the children of Israel were made to feel, and were continually to be reminded of it, that, though separated from all the earth to be a people for Jehovah, they were nevertheless unfit for the presence of their God.

Before they could be permitted, on that awful day, at Mount Sinai, to hear His voice, they had to sanctify themselves for two days, and on the third to be brought to the mount. Their clothes were to be washed and they themselves ready, yet they were not fit to be where God was on Sinai. Bounds were set to sanctify it, to mark it off as ground on which Israel could not tread. They might come to it (Exod. 19:13), but not ascend it, nor touch it. Sanctified they were, according to God's commands, yet Mount Sinai was no place for them. God was there. Moreover the priests were not allowed to ascend it, though sanctified, it would seem, in a more special manner than the people. Chap. 19:22.

Such were God's directions regarding them, which fully accorded with their own feelings, so that even what He permitted them, viz., to come to the mount (Exod. 19:13), they could not do; for we read, they were afraid because of the fire, and went not up to the mount. See Deut. 5:5. They stood under it to hear the law, and then moved afar off. Their conscience told them only too plainly how unfit they were for His presence, and this after strict obedience in sanctifying themselves according to His revealed will. Nothing then they could do could alter their moral condition before Him. Nothing they could do could give them confidence to stand before Him. Circumcision they had submitted to. (Josh. 5:5.) Sanctification of the flesh they had conformed to; but God's immediate presence they felt was no place for them. Yet He was their God, who had redeemed them. They were His people in a peculiar sense. He had shown His favor to them as He had to no other nation. Dividing the Red Sea He had brought them through it. In the wilderness He had guided their steps. He fed them, He gave them water, He made them triumph over Amalek, He was leading them to Canaan; yet there was a moral barrier between Him and them which they could not pass over or break down, do what they might. They were sinful and unclean. He was holy. And this, the lesson they learned in the third month after they came out of Egypt, was the same they were to be continually reminded of, till the ground should be laid by God in grace for man to come before Him in boldness, having no more conscience of sins.

This God immediately provided for in the ordinance of the altar of earth, and the ascent or steps by which to approach it.

If they built an altar, such was God's gracious provision for the willing and thankful heart of any of His people (for this ordinance concerned all the people and not the sons of Aaron only), they might offer thereon for His acceptance burnt offerings and peace offerings. But the altar from which God could accept them must be one that He provided. No artifice of man, no embellishment man could devise, could make it more acceptable to Him, but the very reverse. The altar might be of earth or of stones, but if of the latter, of stones as they found them, not fashioned or graven by any cunning

artificer, for that would pollute it at once. What a lesson was here! The free expression of His people's gratitude God would permit; but man must learn that he could not make an altar of his own devising, or of his own workmanship, suited for God. God must determine beforehand of what it is to be, and how it should be made. The material too He would provide. The altar of earth might appear unsightly, the form of the stones might seem capable of improvement, but God would accept no other.

But observe, this altar was not like the brazen altar where sacrifices for sin could be offered up. It was the altar of a worshipper in a certain relation to God, coming to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings; offerings of sweet savor, the expression of a grateful heart surrendering itself to Him, and feasting with Him. A worshipper then such as Israel could be, an accepted worshipper, was not only capable of defilement, but had in himself that which could impart it. And all the ceremonies appointed by God, or all the sacrifices offered up by the high priest, could make no change in this, or separate any of the people from that which made them liable to pollute the altar.

And what is this root of defilement but the evil nature, the flesh — sin? When they crossed the Jordan, and erected the altar in Mount Ebal, they lifted up no tool on it. Moses had warned them against it, and they obeyed. (Deut. 27:5 - 7; Josh. 8:31.) Though lately circumcised, fresh from victory, and having recently kept the passover in remembrance of redemption, they were nevertheless reminded that they had in themselves that which would defile. And it mattered not who might build an altar to the Lord, whether the whole congregation of Israel (Judg. 21:4), or individuals, as Gideon, Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, the ordinance for all was the same. Fallen man has that in him which pollutes.

But, blessed be God, we have now made known how that root of defilement is removed. It is removed by death. Death must take place ere we can be accepted before God as freed from that which causes pollution. Death, or the change of the living saints, when the Lord shall come, is the only means by which we can be actually, and then eternally freed from sin. By the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, believers are pardoned, justified, and defilement is atoned for. By His death, too, that which defiles, sin, is put away. For "once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb. 9:26.) And now believers have died to sin. (Rom. 6:1.) They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. (Rom. 8:9.) They are risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenlies. (Eph. 2) God of His grace has accomplished this. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17), which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth. (Eph. 5:24.) Such we are before Him in Christ, yet in us there is still the flesh, sin. Paul knew it. Believers are conscious of it. The Spirit given to us contends with it (Gal. 5:17), and we cannot be freed from it till death, or the change of the living, takes place. Till then, like Israel of old, we carry it about with us. Yet, unlike them, we know that, before God, we are in Christ holy and without blame. But whilst in this world there is this root of defilement in the greatest saint as in the greatest sinner, yet the difference between them is immense. The saint, by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, is not in the flesh, and has a life apart from sin, undefiling, and impeccable. The sinner unpardoned is in the flesh, a dead soul before God, communicating defilement and nothing else to everything with which he comes in contact.

But there was another lesson God designed to teach Israel — their nakedness. The first effect from eating of the forbidden tree by Adam and Eve, was to discover they were naked; and the first

work they set about, was to sew fig leaves together to make themselves aprons. There is a truth in this discovery which man has attempted to ignore — that he is naked, and needs a covering before he can appear before God. There is a truth made known by their vain attempt to cover themselves which man would fain conceal, viz., that God, not man, must provide what is needful. The worshipper in Israel was reminded of this in the words “neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon.” A worshipper he was if he approached the altar, yet his nakedness was not effectually covered. And this, which was true at Sinai, was equally true when they returned, and builded again the tabernacle, after the Babylonish captivity, and when John the Baptist stood in their midst, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Throughout the dispensation of the old covenant, till that blood had been shed on which the new covenant shall rest, the worshipper in Israel never could know what it was to be effectually covered, his nakedness completely hid. For, be it again remembered, the altar here spoken of, is not the brazen altar of the court of the tabernacle, nor the golden altar within the sanctuary. For them God gave a special ordinance, providing their pattern and stating their dimensions. Yet, for no altar whether in the tabernacle or temple, till God’s revelation to Ezekiel (43:17), have we any mention of steps. This silence is surely significant. It has a voice for all who will hearken. We may be assured that the silence in Exod. 27 and 30, and 2 Chron. 4, and the special mention of the steps in Ezekiel, are designed to teach something. And what is it? That in the millennium, when the temple is reared, and the priests, the sons of Zadok, are officiating again before the Lord in Jerusalem, and the people in the enjoyment of their own land once more, resettled there by the God of Israel, the worshipper will be so covered that his nakedness can never be exposed; for what was forbidden in Exod. 20 is expressly sanctioned in Eze. 43. Nothing they could do under the law could effectually hide their nakedness. Nothing that anyone can do against them in the millennium will discover it. See Jer. 50:20. Till then, as a nation, it exists. Then it will be found no longer. Reader, do you know why? What discovered man’s nakedness but sin? What covers it but the work of Christ when made known to the soul? From the days of Eden till now men have vainly endeavored to hide it; Adam by his fig leaves, his descendants by their acts, whether of mortification or devotion. But all in vain. “Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works.” (Isa. 59:6.) But God has provided for this. And Israel, after they shall have owned themselves wholly corrupt, all their uprightness here proved to be as filthy rags, restored and blessed through the favor of God and because of that precious blood, the blood of His Son, will know what it is to have their nakedness effectually covered.

But is it only God’s ancient people who need a covering for their nakedness? To whom did the Lord address the words, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear?” (Rev. 3:18.) Was it not to professing Christians? Then believers now may know, should know, what it is to be covered and clothed. “Holy and without blame before Him in love.” “Found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;” “in Christ,” “made the righteousness of God in him.” (Eph. 1:4; Phil. 3:9; Eph. 1:1; 2 Cor. 5:21.) Here is clothing indeed! Here is a complete covering of all nakedness! Reader, do you know this? Reader, have you proved it? What lessons about ourselves does this ordinance concerning the altar teach! What good news about God and the Lord Jesus Christ should it lead the soul to embrace; that which defiles forever put away, that

which sin made us conscious of, forever covered.

Clad in this robe, how bright I shine,

Angels possess not such a dress;

Angels have not a robe like mine —

Jesus, the Lord, my righteousness.

Arise, Go up to Bethel

(Gen. 35)

The words which stand at the head of this paper contain in them a great practical truth to which we desire to call the reader's attention for a moment or two.

It has been well remarked, by someone, that, "God, in His dealings with us, always keeps us up to the original terms." This is true; but some may not exactly understand it. It may, perhaps, savor of the legal element. To speak of God, as keeping us up to certain terms, may seem to militate against that free grace in which we stand, and which has reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. Many, we are aware, have a kind of horror of everything bordering, in the most remote way, upon the legal system; and we may say, we most fully sympathize with such horror. But, at the same time, we must take care not to carry that feeling to such an extent as would lead us to throw overboard aught that is calculated to act, in a divine way, upon the heart and conscience of the believer. We really want practical truth. There is a vast amount of what is called abstract truth in circulation amongst us, and we prize it, and would prize it more and more. We delight in the unfolding of truth in all its departments. But then we must remember that truth is designed to act on hearts and consciences; and that there are hearts and consciences to be acted upon. We must not cry out, "Legal! Legal!" whenever some great practical truth falls upon our ears, even though that truth may come before us clothed in a garb which, at first sight, seems strange. We are called to "suffer the word of exhortation" — to listen to wholesome words — to apply our hearts diligently to everything tending to promote practical godliness and personal holiness. We know that the pure and precious doctrines of grace — those doctrines which find their living center in the Person of Christ, and their eternal foundation in His work — are the means which the Holy Ghost uses to promote holiness in the life of the Christian; but we know also that those doctrines may be held in theory, and professed with the lips, while the heart has never felt their power, and the life never exhibited their molding influence. Yes; and we frequently find that the loudest and most vehement outcry against everything that looks like legality is sure to proceed from those who, though they profess the doctrines of grace, have never felt their sanctifying influence, whereas those who really understand the meaning of grace, and feel its power to mold and fashion, to purify and elevate, are ever ready to welcome the most pungent appeals to the heart and conscience.

Still, the pious reader may desire to know what is meant by the expression quoted above, namely, "God always keeps us up to the original terms." Well, we understand it to mean simply this, that when God calls us to any special position or path, and we fall short of it, or wander from it, He will recall us to it again and again. And further, when we set out in the profession of some special principle of action, or standard of devotedness, and swerve from it, or fall below it, He will remind us of it, and bring us back to it. True, He bears with us patiently, and waits on us graciously; but "He always keeps us up to the original terms."

And can we not praise Him for this? Assuredly we can. Could we endure the thought of His allowing us to fall short of His holy standard, or to wander hither and thither, without His uttering a word to urge us on or call us back? We trust not. Well, then, if He does speak, what must He say? He must just remind us of “the old terms.” Thus it is, and thus it has ever been. When Peter was converted at the lake of Gennesaret, he forsook all and followed Jesus; and the last words that fell on his ear, from the lips of his ascending Lord, were, “Follow thou me.” This was simply keeping him to the original terms. The heart of Jesus could not be satisfied with less, and neither should the heart of His servant. By the lake of Gennesaret, Peter set out to follow Jesus. What then? Years rolled on; Peter had many a stumble, Peter denied his Lord; Peter went back to his boats and nets. What then? Peter was thoroughly restored, and when, as a restored soul, he stood by the side of His loving Lord, at the sea of Tiberias, he was called to listen to that one brief, pointed utterance, “Follow me” — an utterance embracing in its comprehensive grasp, all the details of a life of active service and of patient suffering. In a word, Peter was brought back to the original terms — the terms between Christ and his soul, and between his soul and Christ. He was brought to learn that the heart of Jesus had undergone no change toward him — that the love of that heart was inextinguishable and unalterable — and, because it was so, it could not tolerate any change in his heart — any decline or departure from the original terms.

Now, we see the same thing precisely in the history of the patriarch Jacob. Let us just turn to it for a moment. At the close of Gen. 28 we have the record of the original terms between the Lord and Jacob. We shall quote it at length. “And Jacob went out from Beer-Sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of!”

Here, then, we have the blessed statement of what the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob undertook to do for Jacob and for his seed — a statement crowned by these memorable words, “I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of” Such are the terms by which God binds Himself to Jacob, which terms, blessed be His Name, have been, and will be fulfilled to the letter, though earth and hell should interpose to prevent. Jacob’s seed shall yet possess the whole land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance, for who shall prevent Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God Almighty, from accomplishing His promise?

Let us now hearken to Jacob. “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel.....And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and

raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Thus much as to Bethel and the terms entered into there. God pledged Himself to Jacob; and though heaven and earth should pass away, that pledge must be maintained in all its integrity. He revealed Himself to that poor lonely one who lay sleeping on his stony pillow, and not only revealed Himself to him, but linked Himself with him, in a bond which no power of earth or hell can ever dissolve.

And what of Jacob? Why, he dedicated himself to God, and vowed that the spot where he had enjoyed such a revelation, and hearkened to such exceeding great and precious promises, should be God's house. All this was deliberately uttered before the Lord, and solemnly recorded by Him; and then Jacob went on his journey. Years passed — twenty long and eventful years — years of trial and exercise, during which Jacob experienced many ups and downs, changes and chances, but the God of Bethel watched over His poor servant, and appeared unto him in the midst of his pressure, and said unto him, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred." God had not forgotten the original terms, neither would He let His servant forget them. Is this legality? Nay; it is simply the exhibition of divine love and faithfulness. God loved Jacob, and He would not suffer him to stop short of the old standard. He jealously watched over the state of His servant's heart, and lest it should, by any means, remain below the Bethel mark, he gently reminds him by those touching and significant words, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst the vow." This was the sweet expression of God's unchanging love, and of the fact that He counted on Jacob's remembrance of Bethel scenes.

How amazing that the High and Mighty One, who inhabiteth eternity, should so value the love and remembrance of a poor worm of the earth! Yet so it is, and we ought to bear it more in mind. Alas! we forget it. We are ready enough to take mercies and blessings from the hand of God, and, most surely, He is ready enough to bestow them. But then we ought to remember that He looks for the loving devotion of our hearts to Him; and when we, in the freshness and ardor of other days, set out to follow Christ, to live for Him, and give up all for Him, can we suppose for a moment that He could coldly and indifferently forego His claims upon our heart's affections? Should we like Him to do so? Could we endure the thought of its being a matter of indifference to Him whether we loved Him or not? God forbid! Yea it should be the joy of our hearts to think that our blessed Lord really seeks the loving devotion of our souls to Him, that He will not be satisfied without it, that when we wander hither and thither, He calls us back to Himself, in His own gentle, gracious, touching way.

"When weary of His rich repast,

I've sought alas! to rove;

He has recalled His faithless guest,

And showed His banner, love."

Yes; His banner ever floats, bearing its own inscription upon it to win back our vagrant hearts, and remind us of the original terms. He says to us in one way or another, as He said to Jacob, "I am

the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst the vow." Thus He deals with us, in the midst of all our wanderings, our haltings, and our stumblings. He makes us to know that as we cannot do without His love, so neither can He do without ours. It is truly wonderful, yet so it is. He will keep the soul up to the old terms. Harken to those touching appeals of the Spirit of Christ to His saints, in other days, "Thou hast left thy first love" — "Remember from whence thou art fallen; and repent, and do thy first works." (Rev. 2) "Call to remembrance the former times." (Heb. 10:32) "Where is the blessedness ye spake of?" (Gal. 4:15.)

What is all this, but calling His people back to the old point from which they had declined? It maybe said, they ought not to have needed this. No doubt; yet they did need it, and because they needed it, Jesus did it. It may be said, further, that tried love is better than first love. Granted; but do we not find, as a matter of fact, in our spiritual history, that upon our first setting out to follow Jesus, there is a simplicity, an earnestness, a freshness, fervor, and depth of devotion which, from various reasons, we fail to keep up. We become cold and careless; the world gets in upon us and eats up our spirituality. nature gains the upper hand, in one way or another, and deadens our spiritual sensibility, damps our ardor, and dims our vision. Is the reader conscious of anything like this? If so, would it not be a peculiar mercy if, at this very moment, he were called back to the old terms? Doubtless! Well, then, let him be assured that the heart of Jesus is waiting and ready. His love is unchanging; and not only so, but He would remind you that He cannot be satisfied without a true response from you. Wherefore, beloved friend, whatever has drawn you away from the measure of your earliest dedication to Him, let your heart now spring up, and get back at once to Him. Do not hesitate! Linger not! Cast yourself at the feet of your loving Lord, and let your heart be only for Him. This is the secret spring of all true service. If Christ has not the love of your heart, He does not want the labor of your hands. He does not say, "Son, give me thy money, thy time, thy talents, thine energies, thy pen, thy tongue, thy head;" all these are utterly unavailing, perfectly unsatisfying to Him. What He says to you is, "My son, give me thine heart." Where the heart is given to Jesus, all will come right. Out of the heart come all the issues of life, and if only Christ have His right place in the heart, the work and the ways, the walk and the character will be all right.

But we must return to Jacob, and see further how our subject is illustrated in his fruitful history. At the close of Gen. 33 we find him settling down at Shechem, where he gets into all sorts of trouble and confusion. His house is dishonored, and his sons, in avenging the dishonor, endanger his life. All this Jacob feels keenly, and he says to his sons, Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me, among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me; and I shall be destroyed I and my house."

All this was most deplorable; but it does not appear to have once occurred to Jacob that he was in a wrong place. The defilement and confusion of Shechem failed to open his eyes to the fact that he was not up to the old terms. How often is this the case. We fall short of the divine standard, in our practical ways; we fail in walking up to the height of the divine revelation; and although the varied fruits of our failure are produced on every side, yet our vision is so dimmed by the atmosphere around us, and our spiritual sensibilities so blunted by our associations, that we do not discern how low we are, and how very far short of the proper mark.

However, in Jacob's case, we see the divine principle again and again illustrated. "And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau, thy brother."

Reader, note this. We have here a most exquisite feature in the divine method of dealing with souls. There is not one word said about, Shechem, its pollutions and its contusions. There is not a word of reproof for having settled down there. Such is not. God's way. He employs a far more excellent mode. Had we been dealing with Jacob we should have come down upon him with a heavy hand, and read him a severe lecture about his folly in settling at Shechem, and about his personal and domestic habits and condition. But oh! how well it is that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways like ours! Instead of saying to Jacob, "Why have you settled down in Shechem?" He simply says, "Arise, go up to Bethel;" and the very sound of the word sent a flood of light into Jacob's soul by which he was enabled to judge himself and his surroundings. "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

This was, assuredly, getting back to the original terms. It was the restoring of a soul and a leading in the paths of righteousness. Jacob felt that he could not bring false gods and defiled garments to Bethel; such things might pass at Shechem, but they would never do for Bethel. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.....so Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan, that is Bethel, he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el, because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother."

"EL-Beth-EL." Precious title which had God for its Alpha and its Omega! At Shechem, Jacob called his altar "El-elohe-Israel," that is "God the God of Israel;" but at Bethel, the true standpoint, he called his altar "El-beth-el," that is, God — the house of God. This was true restoration. Jacob was brought back after all his wanderings, to the very point from which he had started. Nothing less than this could ever satisfy God, in reference to His servant. He could wait patiently on him — bear with him — minister to him — care for him — look after him; but He never could rest satisfied with anything short of this, "Arise, go up to Bethel."

Christian reader, pause here. We want to ask you a question. Are you conscious of having wandered from Jesus? Has your heart declined and grown cold? Have you lost the freshness and ardor which once marked the tone of your soul? Have you allowed the world to get in upon you? Have you, in the moral condition of your soul, got down into Shechem? Has your heart gone after idols, and have your garments become defiled? If so, let us remind you of this, that the Lord wants you back to Himself. Yes, beloved, this is what He wants, and He wants it now. He says to you, at this moment, "Arise, go up to Bethel." You will never be happy, you will never be right, until you yield a full response to this blessed and soul-stirring call. O yield it now, we beseech you. Rise up, and fling aside every weight and every hindrance; put away the idols, and change your garments, and get back to the feet of your Lord who loves you with a love which many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown; and who cannot be satisfied until He has you with Himself according

to the original terms. Say not this is legal, it is nothing of the sort. It is the love of Jesus — His deep, glowing earnest love — love which is jealous of every rival affection — love which gives the whole heart and must have a whole heart in return. May God the Holy Ghost bring back every wandering heart to the true standard! May He visit, with fresh power, every soul that has gone down to Shechem, and give no rest until a full response has been yielded to the call, “Arise go up to Bethel.”

Christ in the Vessel

(Mark 4:35-41.)

“Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” This is a very familiar saying. It often passes amongst us; and, no doubt, we fully believe it; but yet when we find ourselves brought to our extremity, we are often very little prepared to count on God’s opportunity. It is one thing to utter or hearken to a truth, and another thing to realize the power of that truth. It is one thing, when sailing over a calm sea, to speak of God’s ability to keep us in a storm, and it is another thing altogether to prove that ability when the storm is actually raging around us. And yet God is ever the same. In the storm and in the calm, in sickness and in health, in pressure and in ease, in poverty and in abundance — “The same yesterday, today, and forever” — the same grand reality for faith to lean upon, cling to, and draw upon, at all times, and under all circumstances.

But, alas! alas! we are unbelieving. Here lies the source of the weakness and failure. We are perplexed and agitated when we ought to be calm and confiding; we are casting about when we ought to be counting on God; we are “beckoning to our partners” when we ought to be “looking unto Jesus.” Thus it is we lose immensely, and dishonor the Lord in our ways. Doubtless, there are few things for which we have to be more deeply humbled than our tendency to distrust the Lord, when difficulties and trials present themselves; and assuredly we grieve the heart of Jesus by thus distrusting Him, for distrust must always wound a loving heart. Look, for example, at the scene between Joseph and his brethren in Gen. 1. “And when Joseph’s brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him. And they sent a messenger unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying, So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.” It was a sad return to make for all the grace and love and tender care which the injured Joseph had exercised towards them. How could they suppose that one who had so freely and fully forgiven them, and spared their lives when they were entirely in his power, would, after so many years of kindness, turn upon them in anger and revenge? It was indeed a grievous wrong, and it was no marvel that “Joseph wept when they spake unto him.” What an answer to all their unworthy fear and dark suspicion! A flood of tears! Such is love! “And Joseph said unto them, Fear not; for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now, therefore, fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.”

Thus it was with the disciples on the occasion to which our paper refers. Let us meditate a little on the passage.

“And the same day, when the even was come. Jesus saith unto them, ‘Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship; and there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the

waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow.”

Here, then, we have an interesting and instructive scene. The poor disciples are brought to their extremity. They are at their wits' end. A violent storm — the ship full of water — the Master asleep. This was a trying moment indeed, and assuredly we, if we look at ourselves, need not marvel at the fear and agitation of the disciples. It is not likely that we should have done better, had we been there. Still, we cannot but see wherein they failed. The narrative has been penned for our learning, and we are bound to study it, and seek to learn the lesson which it reads out to us.

There is nothing more absurd and irrational than unbelief, when we come to look at it calmly. In the scene before us, this absurdity is very apparent; for what could be more absurd than to suppose that the vessel could possibly sink with the Son of God on board? And yet this was what they feared. It may be said, they did not just think of the Son of God, at that moment. True, they thought of the storm, the waves, the filling vessel, and, judging after the manner of men, it seemed a hopeless case. Thus it is the unbelieving heart ever reasons. It looks only at the circumstances, and leaves God out. Faith, on the contrary, looks only at God, and leaves circumstances out.

What a difference! Faith delights in man's extremity, simply because it is God's opportunity. It delights in being “shut up” to God — in having the platform thoroughly cleared of the creature, in order that God may display His glory — in the multiplying of empty vessels, in order that God may fill them. Such is faith. It would, we may surely say, have enabled the disciples to lie down and sleep beside their Master, in the midst of the storm. Unbelief, on the other hand, rendered them uneasy; they could not rest themselves, and they actually aroused the blessed Lord out of His sleep by their unbelieving apprehensions. He, weary with incessant toil, was snatching a few moments' repose while the vessel was crossing the sea. He knew what fatigue was; He had come down into all our circumstances. He made Himself acquainted with all our feelings and all our infirmities, being in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted. He was found as a man in every respect, and as such, He slept on a pillow, and was rocked by the ocean's wave. The storm beat upon the vessel, and the billows rolled over it, although the Creator was on board, in the Person of that weary, sleeping Workman.

Profound mystery! The One who made the sea, and could hold the winds in His almighty grasp, lay sleeping in the hinder part of the ship, and allowed the sea and the wind to treat Him as unceremoniously as though He were an ordinary man. Such was the reality of the human nature of our blessed Lord. He was weary — He slept — and He was tossed on the bosom of that sea which His hands had made. Oh! reader, pause and meditate on this wondrous sight. Look closely — think deeply. No tongue, no pen, can do justice to such a scene. We cannot expatiate; we can only muse and worship.

But, as we have said, unbelief roused the blessed Lord out of His sleep. “They awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?” What a question! “Carest thou not?” How it must have wounded the sensitive heart of the Lord Jesus! How could they ever think that He was indifferent to their trouble and danger? How completely must they have lost sight of His love, to say nothing of His power, when they could bring themselves to say, “Carest thou not?”

And yet, dear christian reader, have we not, in all this a mirror in which to see ourselves reflected? Assuredly, we have. How often in moments of pressure and trial, do our hearts conceive, if our lips do not utter the question, "Carest thou not?" It may be we are laid on a bed of sickness and pain, and we know that one word from the God of all power and might could chase away the malady and raise us up; and yet that word is withheld. Or, perhaps we are in need of temporal supplies, and we know that the silver and gold, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, belong to God — yea, that the treasures of the universe are under His hand; and yet, day after day rolls on, and our need is not supplied. In a word, we are passing through deep waters, in some way or another — the storm rages, wave after wave rolls over our tiny vessel, we are brought to our extremity, we are at our wits' end, and our hearts often feel ready to send up the terrible question, "Canst thou not?" The thought of this is deeply humbling. To think of our grieving the loving heart of Jesus by our unbelief and suspicion, should fill us with the deepest contrition.

And then the absurdity of unbelief! How can that One who gave His life for us — who left His glory und and came down into this world of toil and misery, and died a shameful death to deliver us from eternal wrath — how can such an one ever fail to care for us? But yet we are ready to doubt, or we grow impatient under the trial of our faith, forgetting that the very trial from which we so shrink and under which we so wince, is far more precious than gold, for the former is an imperishable reality, whereas the latter must perish in the using. The more genuine faith is tried, the brighter it shines, and hence the trial, however severe, is sure to issue in praise and honor and glory to Him who not only implants the faith, but also passes it through the furnace and sedulously watches it therein.

But the poor disciples failed in the moment of trial. Their confidence gave way, they roused their Master from His slumber with that most unworthy question, "Carest thou not that we perish?" Alas! what creatures we are!

We are ready to forget ten thousand mercies in the presence of a single difficulty. David could say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul;" and how did it turn out? Saul fell on Mount Gilboa, and David was established on the throne of Israel. Elijah fled for his life at the threat of Jezebel; and what was the issue? Jezebel was dashed to pieces on the pavement, and Elisha was taken to heaven in a chariot of fire. So here, the disciples thought they were going to be lost, with the Son of God on board; and what was the result? The storm was hushed into silence, and the sea became as glass by that voice which, of old, had called worlds into existence. "And he arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

What a combination of grace and majesty is here! Instead of rebuking them for having disturbed His repose, He rebukes those elements which had terrified them. It was thus He replied to their question, "Carest thou not?" Blessed Master! Who would not trust thee? Who would not adore thee for thy patient grace and unupbraiding love?

There is something perfectly beautiful in the way in which our blessed Lord rises, without an effort, from the repose of perfect humanity into the activity of essential Deity. As man, wearied with His work, He slept on a pillow; as God, He rises and, with His almighty voice, hushes the storm and calms the sea.

Such was Jesus, very God, and very man; and such He is now, ever ready to meet His people's need, to hush their anxieties and remove their fears. Would that we could only trust Him more simply. We have little idea of how much we lose by not leaning more on the arm of Jesus, day by day. We are so easily terrified. Every breath of wind, every wave, every cloud, agitates and depresses us. Instead of calmly lying down and reposing beside our Lord, we are full of terror and perplexity. Instead of using the storm as an occasion for trusting Him, we make it an occasion of doubting Him. No sooner does some — trifling trouble arise than we think we are going to perish, although He assures us that not a hair of our head can ever be touched. Well may He say to us, as He said to His disciples, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?" It would indeed seem, at times, as though we had no faith. But oh! His tender love! He is ever near to shield and succor us, even though our unbelieving hearts are so ready to doubt and suspect. He does not deal with us according to our poor thoughts of Him, but according to His own perfect love toward us. This is the solace and stay of our souls in passing across life's stormy ocean homeward to our eternal rest. Christ is in the vessel. Let this ever suffice. Let us calmly rely on Him. May there ever be, at the very center of our hearts, that deep repose which springs from real trust in Jesus; and then, though the storm rage and the sea run mountains high, we shall not be led to say, "Carest thou not that we perish?" It is impossible we can perish with the Master on board, nor can we ever think so, with Christ in our hearts. May the Holy Spirit teach us to make a fuller, freer, bolder use of Christ. We really want this, just now, and shall want it more and more. It must be Christ Himself laid hold of and enjoyed, in the heart, by faith. Thus may it be to His praise and our abiding peace and joy!

We may just notice, in conclusion, the way in which the disciples were affected by the scene on which we have been dwelling. Instead of the calm worship of those whose faith had been answered, they manifest the amazement of those whose fears had been rebuked. "They feared exceedingly and said, one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" Surely they ought to have known Him better. Yes, christian reader, and so should we.

Dead to the Law

“For I through law, am dead to law, that I might live to God” — (Gal. 2:19.) This is a weighty word, and much needed just now. The spiritual apprehension of the truth here set forth will preserve the soul from two errors which are very rife in the professing church, namely, legality, on the one hand, and licentiousness on the other. Were we to compare these two evils — were we compelled to choose between them, we should, undoubtedly, prefer the former. We should much rather see a man under the authority of the law of Moses, than one living in lawlessness and self-indulgence. Of course, we know that neither is right, and that Christianity gives us something quite different; but we have much more respect for a man who, seeing nothing beyond Moses, and regarding the law of Moses as the only divine standard by which his conduct is to be regulated, bows down, in a spirit of reverence to its authority — than for one who seeks to get rid of that law only that he may please himself. Thank God, the truth of the gospel gives us the divine remedy for both cases. But how? Does it teach us that the law is dead? Nay! What then? It teaches that the believer is dead. “I through law am dead to law.” And to what end? That I may please myself? That I may seek my own profit and pleasure? By no means; but “that I may live to God.”

Here lies the grand and all-important truth — a truth lying at the very base of the entire christian system, and without which we can have no just sense of what Christianity is at all. So also, in Rom. 7 we read, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also have become dead to the law (not the law is dead) by the body of Christ, in order that ye may be to another (not to yourselves, but) even to him that was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God.” (v. 4.) And again, “But now ye are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein ye were held, that ye might serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of letter.” (v. 6.) Mark, it is that we may serve, not that we may please ourselves. We have been delivered from the intolerable yoke of Moses, that we may wear the “easy yoke of Christ,” and not that we may give a loose run to nature.

There is something perfectly shocking to a serious mind, in the thought of men appealing to certain principles of the gospel, in order to establish a plea for the indulgence of the flesh. They want to fling aside the authority of Moses, not that they may enjoy the authority of Christ, but merely to indulge self. But it is vain. It cannot be done with any shadow of truth, for it is never said in scripture that the law is dead or abrogated; but it is said, and urged repeatedly, that the believer is dead to the law, and dead to sin, in order that he may taste the sweetness of living unto God, of having his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

We earnestly commend this weighty subject to the attention of the reader. He will find it fully unfolded in Rom. 4 and 5, Gal. 3 and 4. A right understanding of it will solve a thousand difficulties, and answer a thousand questions; and, not only so, but deliver the soul from a vast mass of error and confusion. May God give His own word power over the heart and conscience!

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

Ver. 1. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." It is well with the soul when it longs after the habitation of God — when it loves the meetings of His saints because He is there. It is the new nature breathing after the living God, and desiring blessing from Him.

There may be a certain pleasure felt by some in attending a place of worship, so-called, who have no divine life in their souls, but such go not to meet God. Strong emotions, of a reverential kind, may be awakened through tender associations, as the congregation sings,

How lovely is thy dwelling place,

O Lord of hosts, to me!

The tabernacles of thy grace

How pleasant, Lord, they be.

We'll go into His tabernacles,

And at His footstool bow.

Arise, O Lord, into thy rest,

Th' ark of thy strength, and thou.

Nevertheless, were they to be told when on the way to their accustomed meeting place, that God was to be there, they would gladly turn back. It is only the new nature that can say, "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Having the divine nature, we are capable of enjoying God and delighting in Him. True personal piety loves the tabernacles of the Lord. The place of His presence is the favorite resort of the devoted soul. Three things are necessary to acceptable worship. 1. The divine nature as the capacity. 2. The Holy Spirit as the power. 3. The word of God as the rule. John 4:23, 24.

This is true and blessed experience, O my soul. Is it thine? But may not even the babe in Christ enjoy it? It is written, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and surely the child is of the same nature as his Father, and capable of the closest fellowship with Him; and we have also His word and Spirit. True, O most true! But art thou child-like enough to have no rule but thy Father's word, and no power but His Spirit? Is there nothing in thy religious ways which is the fruit of tradition or education. Oh! my Father and my God, I know I am thine — I bow to the truth; but O give me to enter more distinctly - more consciously into these blessed realities.

But may I ask of thee, and of all to whom the question belongs — what is thy motive? what is thine object? what are thy desires in attending the meetings of God's people? Art thou quite clear about the three things? Do not the frequency, regularity, and general uniformity of the services tend to

weaken their proper effect on thy soul, and to lead thee to forget their true meaning and object? The thought of going to the habitation of God, and of being with Him there, could not fail to produce an immense effect upon us if we fully realized it. What thorough self-judgment there would be, before leaving the secret chamber for the public sanctuary; and what close watchfulness over every thought, word, and act, while there: not that there should be the least feeling of bondage, for the Father's presence is the children's home, and the place of happy liberty. "The Father seeketh such to worship him." He not only accepts, but seeks our worship, He loves to hear His children's praise, adoration, thanksgiving. But for this very reason, He would have their worship to be with the heart and with the understanding also.

Oh! what a thought! What grace! God dwelling with men: not as a visitor merely, as He was with our first parents in the garden of Eden, but as a dweller. Meditate on this great truth, O my soul. Be not thoughtless or forgetful, suffer not custom to induce formality; alas, that the constant enjoyment of such privileges should be the means of destroying their native power over our souls! Remember, O remember, it is the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts, thou art invited to. The word, "tabernacle," means the dwelling of God with man. This thought of wondrous love and grace to us has been in God's mind from the beginning. He showed Moses a pattern of the tabernacle on the mount. The plan is His own; but O what will it be when it is fully carried out! For this we must wait till we are in the new heavens and the new earth. Then God will have everything His own way in His own house. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:3, 4.

What a description of our future dwelling place! Who can conceive its blessedness! But it is home — the Father's house. And no thought of blessedness to the human heart can rise above that which these words inspire, "My Father's house." And, oh! wondrous thought! this is the eternal state, and home is its character. "Forever with the Lord." The millennium is past — the ages have run their course — eternity in its unmingled happiness is begun. And what is the symbol of its perfect blessedness? Just that which has always been the symbol of God's grace and man's privilege, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." How sweetly one has sung of this — our future, happy home.

"High in the Father's house above,

My mansion is prepared:

There is the home, the rest, I love,

And there my bright reward.

With Him I love, in spotless white,

In glory I shall shine;

His blissful presence my delight,

His love and glory mine.

All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away:
And I shall dwell with God's beloved,
Through God's eternal day."

It is also worthy of special note, that in this beautiful description of our future dwelling place, there is no mention of different classes. "The tabernacle of God is with men" —simply "men." "The former things are passed away." The distinctions of time are at an end. It is no longer Jews and Gentiles; or nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples, but simply "men."

There will, no doubt, be individual and spiritual distinctions; we can never lose our individuality, and that which is of the Spirit in us can never perish. But all will be in the resurrection-body, and bearing the image of the heavenly. In God's new world there will neither be Jew nor Greek, but new "men" in Christ Jesus. This will be God's new order of things, and in the midst of which, He takes up His eternal abode. This is enough to know! happy family! happy home! happy scenes of never-ending blessedness! Oh! that all we tenderly love may be there! Oh! to have an unbroken family circle there — no missing link! God in richest mercy grant it, through our blessed Lord Jesus Christ!

"God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be,
And radiant hosts forever share
The unveiled mystery."

But the leading thought in our beautiful Psalm, is not so much our dwelling with God, as God dwelling with us. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts." At the present moment, of course, it is in the Church He dwells, through the Holy Spirit. "In whom ye also are budded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:16-22.) Ere long, the children will have reached their Father's house on high, as we have just been seeing, but so long as they are "passing through the valley of Baca," He graciously moves with them in their traveling tent, so that in one sense they are absent from His dwelling place — the house of many mansions, and are earnestly longing to be there, as we often sweetly sing,

"Here in the body pent, absent from Him I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent a day's march nearer home.
Then shall all clouds depart, the wilderness shall cease;
And sweetly shall each gladdened heart enjoy eternal peace."

But it is to the great truth of God's presence with us now, in the assemblies of His saints, that I desire to draw thy closest attention, O my soul. And as Paul says to his son Timothy, "that thou mayest know how to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:15.) Surely the consideration that He is there, would lead

to a spirit of worship and holy becoming watchfulness over our whole deportment. For although the house, through man's failure (2 Tim. 2:20, 21), has become "a great house," in which there are vessels "to honor, and some to dishonor," the principle of God's habitation, and that which is due to His presence, must remain unchangeably the same. And if we cannot say in faith, the Lord is there, what is the use of our going. It would only be a human association, however orderly, not the "habitation of God through the Spirit." It is to this blessed fact, O my soul, that I beg thy deepest meditation. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This is our Lord's sacred pledge, He seeks not to be relieved from it; only we do relieve Him, if we are gathered to any name but His. This is the condition, "gathered together in my name:" that is the pledge, "there am I in the midst of them." True, I grant, the Lord is above all our ignorance and failure, and He can be, and surely is, present in meetings where faith could not say, for certain, the Lord is in the midst of them. Faith is ruled by the word of God, not by the experience even of His blessing. Faith in His presence works wonders in the soul, and in the assembly. It checks the pretensions of mere nature, it readily dispenses with all human inventions, it quiets all fears, and gives perfect rest of heart in His all sufficiency.

But how is it, may I ask — on what ground can God thus dwell with sinful man? This seems even more wonderful than men dwelling with God in their bodies of glory. Both are wonderful, but both are the fruit of the great work of redemption. We owe both to the blood of Jesus. Redemption is the foundation of relationship. We never read of God dwelling with Adam in the garden of Eden, though in a state of innocence. He made a happy dwelling place for him, and set him in it, and it would appear that He visited him there, but He never dwelt with him. Creation could not furnish a suitable foundation for God's dwelling place on earth.

The song of Moses (Exod. 15) is the first intimation we have of God's habitation on the earth. But now, observe, redemption, typically, is accomplished — the great deliverance is wrought. The desire of Moses is answered by the revelation of God's own eternal purpose. But He waits until His people are safely through the sea. "The Lord is my strength and song," sang Moses, "and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Further on he is privileged to sing God's answer to his own desire. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people which thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established." Note here, my soul, that God adds the word "holy" when speaking of His habitation — not merely "habitation" according to the desire of Moses, but "holy habitation;" and, further, it is called "the sanctuary." These expressions stamp the character of God's dwelling-place according to His mind.

Now that the work of redemption is accomplished — His people delivered out of the land of Egypt — not an hoof left behind — the song of victory on their lips, and their faces Zion ward; He ascends His cloudy chariot as the Great "I AM," to guide them through the desert, and be their all-sufficient help in every time of need.

Learn then, O my soul, this one, grand, all-pervading truth — the value of the blood of Jesus. Or, rather, seek to know God's estimate of its value. When thou hast in some good measure learned this lesson, a thousand doubts and difficulties, as to God's ways in grace with man, will disappear.

But who on earth can speak of its power? We know it delivers from Egypt's bondage, sin, and misery, and vindicates God in showing mercy. It is the basis of all blessing from first to last; it is our title to the highest privileges, and to the richest blessings of heaven. It has rent the veil and laid open the way to the Father's throne, and fitted the children to be there; it has opened to the worshipper the Holy of holies; and it has unlocked to the sleeping dust of God's redeemed, the portals of the tomb. It meets the highest claims of God, and the deepest necessities of man.

Is it asked then, how can God dwell on earth with failing man? The answer is in the blood. Or, is it asked, how can such ever dwell with God in heaven? Again, we can only reply, the answer is in the blood. In virtue of that precious blood, faith can say — the immediateness of God's presence, in Christ, is now my happy home, and shall assuredly be forever. And so far from feeling anything like a spirit of bondage there, the blessed feeling is —at home, in happy liberty; but everywhere else is distance, bondage, misery.

"Until I saw the blood, 'twas hell my soul was fearing;

And dark and dreary in my eyes the future was appearing,

While conscience told its tale of sin,

And seemed a weight of woe within.

But when I saw the blood, and looked to Him who shed it,

My title clear to peace was seen, and I with transport read it,

I found myself to God brought nigh,

And "Victory" became my cry.

My joy was in the blood, the news of which had told me,

That spotless as the Lamb of God, my Father could behold me,

And all my boast was in His name

Through whom this great salvation came.

And when, with golden harps, the throne of God surrounding,

The white-robed saints around the throne their songs of joy are sounding,

With them I'll praise that precious blood

Which has redeemed our souls to God."

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

But before passing on to the second verse, may I have a word with those, who have never felt their need, or seen the value of the blood of Jesus? You go regularly, it may be, to what you call, your place of worship; but whatever it may be to others, to you it can be no place of worship. Worship is the grace that has come down to save, re-ascending in grateful praise. But you are unpardoned, unsaved, unreconciled to God, and dare not come into His presence. His presence would be

intolerable to you, and your sin would be intolerable to Him. Without the pardoning, cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, you can never come happily together. Why then, O why, be satisfied with a mere form of religion? Were God to meet you on your own ground, what would be the consequence? Nothing but the terrors of judgment against sin — nothing “but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” The “adversaries” are those who despise the blood of the covenant.

Oh then, dear friends — you who belong to that class — that large class, who pay an outward respect to religion, but have no inward grace in your souls, be warned — affectionately warned in time. The mere flickering light of profession is extinguished forever when the Bridegroom comes. You are left in darkness — eternal darkness, just when the light is needed. The brightness of His coming will extinguish forever the lamps of the foolish virgins. Let me entreat you then, to come at once to Jesus. Come to Himself. His own word is “come unto me.” It is not, be persuaded, go there, or do this, or that, but simply, sweetly, graciously, heartily, “come unto me,” and the promise is sure, “I will give you rest.” If you come to Jesus, you are God’s friends, if you refuse, you are God’s foes. Are you not alarmed sometimes? are you not unhappy? It must be so. Are you not going the downward road to destruction with your eyes open? Oh! what shelter, think you, would the thin veil of a little religiousness afford? It would only be the witness of your guilt, like Adam’s fig-leaf apron, and aggravate your misery. Awful thought! No Jesus — no blood — no pardon — no salvation — no heaven! Oh! the thought, the dreadful thought, of going down, it may be, from a well-frequented pew, or from the communion table, to the depths of unutterable woe.

May God in mercy save from this awful doom every precious soul that shall ever hold these lines in his hands Him that cometh to me, says the loving, gracious Savior, I will in no wise cast out. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

“The Seraphim, with shading wings,
Whose cry through heaven’s vast temple rings,
In glory serve near God’s high throne,
And there may blood-washed sinners come.
From darkness brought to wondrous light,
And called to walk with Christ in white,
O may our lips and lives declare
His praise whose holy name we bear.”

Ver. 2. “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” Here, an important question presents itself — Is there any difference between the state of a believer who longs and thirsts for the courts of the Lord, and one who longs and thirsts for the Lord Himself? Most assuredly there is. Both states are good, and they may be very closely connected, but they are distinct; and both may have been the experience of the believer at different times. In the one case, blessing is desired, in the other, it is God Himself. Blessing would surely be the result in the latter case, even more abundantly than in the former, but

it is not the object. If the quality of an action depends upon the motive, the difference is manifest. In the one state, self is thought of; in the other, God only. But if we compare the first two verses of this Psalm, with the first two of Psalm 63, we may see more clearly what the difference is.

Psalm 63, you will observe, opens differently to Psalm 84, and surely in a much higher strain. There, the desire of the soul is for God Himself. It says, with great fervor, "My God" It is fully conscious of its relationship with Him, and the blessings which flow there from. What state of soul can be more blessed than this? Only listen to its deep and ardent, yet holy breathings, "O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." Psalm 84 opens with, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." Here, God is known and desired, but it is in His relationship with His people — as He reveals Himself in the assembly of His saints. There, it is the direct, blessed, outgoing of the new nature to Himself, abstractly, though placed in the most unfavorable circumstances, even in the dry and thirsty land, where no water is. Here, it is more like the longings of a captive Israelite, who once enjoyed the privileges of the tabernacle worship, but who is now deprived of those happy seasons. Nevertheless, he who thus longs after the courts of the Lord, is no stranger, either to them, or to the Lord who is worshipped there. It was love to the Lord, no doubt, that led the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, to propose to make three tabernacles. The desire was that He might remain with them in the tabernacle; so that in some cases, the tabernacles may be valued for the sake of Him who dwells there. But though the living God must ever be the real object of all the desires of the new nature, the blessed truth, as to the privileges of God's children, may not be fully known, and if so, the thoughts cannot rise to their proper center.

How grateful to the heart of God must it be, to see His child so longing after Himself, and so caring for His glory, as in Psalm 63, and that, too, when everything in the world is against it. But in such a case, self is lost sight of, it is the divine life that breathes. What bloom — what fruit, for the eye of God, in this wilderness world! But this was always and perfectly so in Christ only. The world, and even Israel as God's sanctuary, was to Him a dry and thirsty land, yet His first care ever was His Father's glory. Blessed, perfect example, for all the children of God! Let it be thine, I pray thee, O my soul. Let the subject command thy deepest meditation. It is worthy of thy most prayerful study, and of thy closest imitation. This world never furnished for Him one drop of water to quench His thirst, or one green blade to refresh His eye, yet He complained not, but trusted in the Lord and waited for Him. All His fresh springs were on high. He drank at the fountain; yet, as man, He thirsted for God — the living God, as no one else ever did. He could say, in a sense peculiarly His own, "O GOD, thou art my God; early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."

But is not the Christian now, as welcome in those courts above, as was the once lowly Jesus Himself? Through the riches of God's grace He is. And, oh! what grace this is! His title is thine — His privileges are thine — thou art ONE with Him as the exalted man in heaven. Let thy thoughts then, and the deep breathings of thy heart rise to their proper object. Though feeling this world's barrenness, murmur not, but send thy thoughts above, and drink at the fountain there. Reckon that all thy fresh springs are in the living God - thy God and Father. Meditate on the countless blessings of accomplished redemption, and of closest relationship. Know that thou art a child in the

family of God — a member in the body of Christ, as risen and glorified, and also a servant, in His kingdom. Seek, O seek, to walk worthy of such distinguished privileges. They are now real to faith, and shall, ere long, be fully manifested in the glory. And, oh! blessed truth, these relations in grace can never be disturbed. God's gifts and calling are without repentance. He never recalls His gifts, neither in time nor throughout eternity. Hast thou a gift? — wait upon it — cultivate it — be diligent in thy gift — it is thine forever, and to be used forever for God's glory, though now we know not in what way. But, meantime, let these things be thy whole study - the one great business of all thy earthly days. The knowledge of Christ is the most excellent of all knowledge; and the science of Christianity is the most excellent of all science.

But we must take one other glance at Psalm 63 before leaving it. In place of the saint seeking his own blessing in the courts of the Lord, right as that may be, we find him longing to see the power and glory of God. "My soul longeth," he says, "to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary." This is surely a blessed state of soul to be in, especially when in the sanctuary, or seated at the Lord's table. In place of thinking about good to ourselves, we should be thinking about glory to Him. Would to God that this were more usually the case with those whose privilege it is to remember and show forth His dying love.

How differently even Christians may be occupied, though seated around the same table, and eating the same bread, and drinking the same wine. We speak not now of timid, doubting souls who go there tearing and trembling, lest they should eat and drink judgment to themselves; but of those who have the full assurance of pardon and acceptance. Some may be occupied with the happy associations of the place — the presence of certain friends, rather than the presence of the Lord; or, it may be, with their own refreshment. They may have come weary and thirsty, but their thoughts and desires are not rising higher than their own blessing. Of course, they know it is the Lord's table, and that He is there; but such is their present state of soul, that they rise not to full occupation with Himself, or to the apprehension of His power and glory as displayed in the sanctuary. But when we are more thoroughly done with self, and more fully occupied with Christ, it is different. He is then our all and in all — a perfect covering to the eyes — the complete filling up of the heart. We are sweetly conscious of our nearness to Him, and of our oneness with Him. We remember Him on the cross, we know Him on the throne. The effects of the cross and the effects of the glory are seen and felt. Love is lost in its object, and the disciple is lost in his Lord. He has not a breath but for His praise, and not a word but for thanksgiving.

" Of the vast universe of bliss,

The Center Thou, and Sun:

Th' eternal theme of praise is this,

To heaven's beloved One. Worthy,

O Lamb of God, art Thou,

That ev'ry knee to Thee should bow."

This, O my soul, is worship — true, spiritual worship; and well becomes, on all occasions, the courts of the Lord — the Holy of holies. Christ has His right place in the heart, and in the assembly. The Holy Ghost is unrieved — unquenched. Is this thine own experience, may I ask? Is it thy

habit, or only known at intervals and far between? There is no good reason why it should not be the uniform experience of every Christian. The blood of the sacrifice has been sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat — sin has been blotted out — the Great High Priest is in the sanctuary above, and the Holy Ghost is in the assembly on earth. God is fully satisfied in Christ - He has thought of everything for us — we can only worship and adore. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

We now turn for a little, in our meditations on the sanctuary, to a class of hearers, who stand at an infinite distance from those on whom we have been meditating. No comparison can be drawn. Outwardly, all may seem to have the same object in view; but, inwardly, and in God’s sight, it is far otherwise. There is reality in the one, but only formality in the other. Christians may be actuated by different motives, but all have eternal life, and, like water, this life naturally rises to its source — God in Christ.

Hence the thirst for God — the living God. They cannot live in a land where no water is, they must draw from the resources of heaven to meet their need on earth. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14.) But where there is no divine life, there can be no divine motive, desire, or object. The natural man rises no higher than himself — self, not God, is his center, motive, and end.

Why then, it may be asked, does the natural man care about going to any place of worship? Various reasons might be given, but in no case could it be said, that to “draw near to God” is his object. His thought is rather to appease God by going, and to keep Him at a distance. We speak now of professors, who know something of God and of their own unfitness for His presence, but who attend some place of divine worship — so called.

There is in every merely natural man a dread of God. Ever since the day that “Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden,” it has been so. And the truth which we have now stated then came out. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.” But just because man is afraid of God, he is willing to go through a certain amount of religious observances, with the view, as we have said, of appeasing or satisfying God, and thus, for the time, keeping Him at a distance. This may not be said in so many words, or even owned, but the melancholy fact is everywhere apparent. Are not the usual carnal enjoyments of a Sunday afternoon, more heartily entered into when the usual religious services have been attended to in the forenoon? And why is this? Because the neglect of religious duties would disturb the conscience, and so mar the pleasure.

Miserable as this state of things may appear, it is but the necessary condition of souls not reconciled to God. Such must be the state of things between the soul and God, however fair the profession, until He is known in the Person and work of Jesus. Those two words of awful depth, “without God,” describe their sad condition. Nothing can be more awful. “Without God” as to every circumstance around, and “without God” as to every thought and feeling within. What a gloomy, lonely, empty scene it must be, notwithstanding the apparent gaiety and happiness of those who

fill it! The immortal soul with its noble capacities, is without its proper object. Still, while here, it is upheld by a false hope, and the enemy is hindered from driving it to despair. Indeed, his object is rather to soothe and stimulate, than to awaken and alarm. The deadly sleep of sin suits his purpose better. But, oh! what must the agony be, when the eyes are opened in that place where no mercy can ever come - when the fearful and hopeless doom of the soul is fully realized!

Dear reader, if thou art still "without God" — a Christian only in name — oh! listen to a word of faithful warning, entreaty, and encouragement. Why, O why, not give heed to these things? O, Why not believe God's word now? Why not flee from the wrath to come now? The full tide of God's free grace is flowing through the land now. Whosoever will, may drink of these living waters now. The door of mercy stands wide open now. The Savior waits to welcome all who come now. None who come are cast out now. The very fountain of redeeming love is open to all now. It is free to all - it is free to thee: come — O come — drink freely — drink abundantly — the spring can never dry up — the channel can never be choked — why not drink and live? Why content thyself with a mere empty form? Nothing short of reality will suit God. Refuse not these living waters now, lest the day come when worlds could not purchase one drop of cold water to cool thy burning tongue. Oh! what a day of grace this is, when access to the very fountain of God's love is open to the chief of sinners — to the most hollow of professors. "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." (Rev. 21:9.) Now, grace is supreme, it is characterized as a sovereign. "Grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 5:21.

Oh! sin not away, dear reader, this day of wondrous grace. Even now thou art an infinite loser with all the earthly pleasures, compared with one who can say, "O God, thou art my God." Who could describe the black desolation of a soul that is without God — without the Saviour — without the Comforter — and, consequently, without pardon — without peace — without salvation? The good things of this life may be possessed in abundance — the heart maybe generous — the mind richly endowed — the associations to a wish, and a capacity ample enough to enjoy them all. Still, he is "without God," and the whole system in which he moves, so far as his soul is concerned, is an utter desolation — a scene of dismal emptiness. Why, supposing he could lay his hand on all the treasures of earth, and say, "these are mine," it would be but earth still, and earth only.

Nothing short of being brought to God in all the blessedness of Christ, can meet the soul's need. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.....Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." God only can fill up the dreary void of an unsaved soul. There is no life but in His favor — no rest but in His love, and no joy but in His presence. "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Wert thou a master in Israel, and a stranger to the new birth, it would avail thee nothing. There is no heavier doom in Scripture than that which is denounced against "sinners in Zion;" and no judgment so given in detail, as that against Babylon. "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings." (Isa. 33:14.) This must be the fearful end, and the awful eternity of those who are not "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." Outside of His presence they must be forever. And, in saying this, we have said what is the summing up of all misery. To be outside the presence of God. is to be in the forsaken place. A thousand figures may be used to describe its desolation, but one stroke of the divine pen sums it all up in that word, "forsaken." What heart would not sink there? We learn something of its terribleness from Him who

was there in love for us.

It is bad enough to be “without God in this world,” but what must it be in the next? Now, the sinner thinks the evil day far off, hope bears him up, and he makes merry with his friends, and seems quite happy. But the day will come when he must leave them all, and then, alas, the awful reality will be known. The eternity which he refused to prepare for, and the wrath which he refused to flee from, are come. Behind the stroke of death which has removed him from this world, is the judgment of God against sin; and now that judgment must take its course. There is no Saviour — no intercessor, at the judgment seat. The awful sentence, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,” is heard. He had often listened to the invitation, “Come unto me,” but heeded it not. But now, no beseeching, bitter cry can alter the sentence — he knows it. Beseeching, weeping, struggling, are in vain. He must go to his place. But, alas! alas! it is to the forsaken place — forsaken of God — forsaken of man: as godless, Christless, homeless, friendless, he is cast into outer darkness. His eternal state is sealed. The gates of hell can be broken. Weep, weep, O my soul! lament with a sore lamentation — the fearful end of “sinners in Zion” — of lifeless professors! Oh! that the gospel trumpet may give a long, a loud, and a certain sound everywhere — that many may be awakened, ere it be too late.

Should these lines ever meet the eye of one whose conscience honestly says, “I am the man” — pause, I pray thee, and listen to a last appeal. That fearful place, shouldst thou be taken away in thy sins, must be thine forever. Yes, painful as it is to write it - that sentence — that prison-house — that chain — that fire, must, ere long, be thine, unless there be a thorough change of mind — a genuine repentance — and a true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But why not be decided at once, and give thy heart to Jesus? Is it fair, I ask, to offer to Him the cold formalities of a lifeless faith, and to give thy whole heart to the world? He only deserves the heart, and He only can lawfully demand it. But well I know thou wilt never give thy heart to Him, until thou believest that He has given His heart for thee. But when this great truth is seen, no power on earth or in hell could keep thy heart from Him. Then thy cry would be, “O, if I had a hundred hearts He should have them all!”

“Take Thou our hearts, and let them be

Forever closed to all but Thee;

Thy willing servants, let us wear

The seal of love forever there.”

Let thine eye then, dear reader, be fixed on the loving Savior, and keep it fixed there, until thy heart goes freely out to Him. It can only be drawn by what thou seest in Him. Think not of thine own heart, or of the act of surrendering it. Let Him draw it to Himself, blessed Lord! He only is worthy of it, and He only can fill it. Dwell on the love of His heart — think of the love that willingly went to the forsaken place for thee a sinner; and if the gates of thy heart open not to the loving, longsuffering, gracious Savior, who still knocks, and still patiently waits there, all the tongues and pens in the world must prove ineffectual. The Lord grant that thy heart may be made captive by His victorious love!

“Drawn by such cords we’ll onward move,

Till round the throne we meet,

And, captives in the chains of love,

Embrace our Saviour's feet."

Ver. 3. "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God" The tender care of God, over the least of His creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The psalmist, while in exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God's altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of His minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. "God fails not," as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most worthless, and a nest for the most restless of birds." What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of Him who provides so fully for the need of all His creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security — a shelter from storm — a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil— a protection from all that can harm — "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in?"

But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strikes us forcibly in our meditations — they knew not Him from whom all this kindness flowed — they knew neither His heart nor His hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of His tender care; He thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there, but rise, in spirit, and seek, and find, and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God Himself. "My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

But that we may the better understand the true position and the spiritual meaning of the altars of God, let us take a glance for a moment at the camp in the wilderness.

Coming towards the tabernacle, we meet with the sin-offering. It is burning outside the camp. The sin with which the victim was charged, typically, is consumed there. This is the type of Christ, who knew no sin, made sin for us. The whole question of sin was settled on the cross. The sin of our nature, and the many sins of our life, were judged, condemned, and put away there. The blood of the sin-offering was taken within the veil, and its body was burnt to ashes outside the camp. The apostle, in alluding to this offering, observes, "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate." Heb. 13:11, 12.

And now, leaving the sin-offering behind, we enter the gate of the court. The first thing that meets us here, is the brazen altar, or altar of burnt offering: sin is not the question here. That has been dealt with outside. It is a sweet savor offering. Jesus, the spotless Lamb, is a sweet savor unto God. There is identification with the offering, on the part of the offerer, but no transfer of guilt to it. "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted for him, to make atonement for him." (Lev. 1:4.) This identification of the offerer with the offering, plainly sets forth the Christian's identification with Christ in death, resurrection, ascension, and acceptance.

The whole of the offering ascended as a sweet savor unto God. Infinite holiness, righteousness, and love, fed upon the burnt-offering. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." (John 10:17.) The believer is one with Christ who died and rose again, and is accepted in the Beloved. When this truth is known in the soul, the believer has settled peace with God. He rests, as it were, in the altar. "Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God." Not that the Jew ever had what we call settled peace; "For it is not, possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But what they could not do, Christ has done. "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10) So that the spiritual meaning of the types is now more fully revealed. "The darkness is past," as John says, "and the true light now shineth." Hence, Jewish terms are used in the New Testament, as illustrative, rather than descriptive of christian blessing. The terms "altars," "sanctuary," "tent," and "tabernacle," are full of instruction to the Christian, and are typical of that which is connected with our position, character, and blessing; but it is always better to study the shadow through the substance, than the substance through the shadow.

May we not say of many now, that they still linger in the cheerless desert, and never get nearer the tabernacle than the sin-offering? Like the publican they stand afar off, and cry, "God, be merciful to me a sinner;" but we can never tread the courts of the Lord, until, having seen our sins consumed in the wilderness, we pass through the gate. Then we can say with the apostle, "He who was delivered for our offenses" — as the sin-offering, "was raised again for our justification" — as the burnt-offering. Then the true consequences of faith in the complete work of Christ are divinely given. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is christian position, and perfect rest to the heart. Being justified— having peace — standing in grace — waiting for glory. Death, judgment, sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, are all behind him, and nothing but the glory of God fills his bright future. He is to "rejoice in hope," not merely of glory, but "of the glory of God." For a believer to remain in the barren wilderness, and cry to God for mercy as a sinner, or as a leper outside the camp, is not humility, but dishonoring to the Lord, and injurious to ourselves. The Lord give us to rest in the work finished at the brazen altar, and to worship in the sweet fragrance of the golden altar.

"O Lord, the way, the truth, the life!

Henceforth let sorrow, doubt, and strife,

Drop off like autumn leaves!

Henceforth, as privileged by Thee,

Simple and undistracted be,

My soul which to Thee cleaves!"

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

We now advance to the laver. It stood between the brazen altar and the door of the tabernacle. We have the substance of this shadow in John 13. At the consecration of the priest, the entire person was washed at the laver; but this washing was never repeated. It was the sign of regeneration. "The washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." We may be

restored more than once, but we can only be regenerated once.

In all who would draw near to God, regeneration is the first and indispensable thing. We must first be right as to nature, and then as to practice. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But though we cannot trace or explain the operations of the Spirit in the new birth, there is no need to be perplexed, or troubled with doubts as to the blessed reality. The word of God is plain. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And again, we read, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The soul that has faith in Christ Jesus, has been washed in the laver of regeneration, and is capable of worshipping and serving God.

After the priests were duly consecrated, they only washed their hands and feet at the laver; but this they did every time that they engaged in service, or drew near to worship. What a lesson for thee, O my soul! Weigh it well. Dismiss it not in haste. Dwell on the great practical bearing of these words, "Every time they engaged in service, or drew near to worship" Regeneration is not enough of itself for the worship and service of God; nay, more, the full assurance of pardon outside the camp, and of acceptance inside the court, are not enough; there must be personal purity — the sanctification of the heart to God, or communion, with Him will be interrupted. Holiness becometh God's people — God's service — God's worship — God's house, forever. No change of dispensation can alter this. "It shall be a statute forever to them."

On pain of death, the priests were commanded to wash their hands and their feet at the laver, according to the ordinance of God. They might not always see a need for it, nevertheless they were to wash. Neither would any sort of water do, it must be the water in the laver of brass. Here, again, my soul, learn another lesson; for I know of no symbol, more fraught with practical lessons than the laver. Learn then, that no human resource - no merely human notion or effort, however apparently wise and prudent, can supply that which fits us for the worship and service of God. And many who are content to trust Christ for justification, believe that sanctification is a matter of attainment by their own efforts; hence their disquiet, and often great trouble of soul, because they see no progress. But we must learn to find all in Christ, and make progress in our knowledge of Him, and of what we have now in Him. The laver, most likely, was filled with water from the smitten rock — from the same wounded side the cleansing water and the justifying blood both flowed.

The hands and the feet characterize our works and our ways; and if we would go on happily with God, all these must be tested by His word. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.....By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalm 119:9; 17:4.) The word of God, acting upon the heart and conscience, through the light and power of the Holy Spirit, answers to the typical use of the laver. It is "the washing of water by the word." But if we allow in our works or ways that which the word of God condemns, the freshness and power of our christian character are gone. Solemn consideration! Would to God it were more considered! How often, alas! it happens, that for some trifling vanity, Christ is lost sight of, the blood of atonement, and the water of purification are forgotten, communion is interrupted, spiritual weakness follows, and, it may be, doubts and fears. Under such, circumstances, we can only drag heavily through a service which we may not be willing openly to give up, and in some circumstances, such spiritual deadness must prove a drag upon

others.

As the importance of this subject cannot be over-estimated, we shall give in full, the word of the Lord thereon. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal; and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations." Exod. 30:18-21.

The force of these solemn warnings, seems to be embodied in the Lord's words to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He does not say, observe, thou hast no part in me, but, no part with me. It is not a question of life in Christ, but of fellowship with Him. The meaning of the figure is plain — in going through this world of temptation and sin, after our conversion, we contract defilement by the way, which Christ only, as our Great High Priest, can cleanse away. But we must be open and unreserved in our confession to Him. We must put, as it were, our soiled feet into His hands, that He may wash them, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He is girded. We can keep no secrets from Him. The condition of the feet proves where we have been. Deliberately to allow or indulge in anything, whether in thought, word, or deed, that is contrary to Him, defiles the conscience, hinders communion, and weakens our christian energies. But in the midst of much conscious weakness and failure, even with much watchfulness, let us not forget the blessed truth — the rest-giving truth — that Christ is our sanctification. In the sin-offering, we see Him as our sin-bearer; in the burnt-offering as our risen life and acceptance, and in the laver as our complete sanctification. "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30.

True, He has gone to heaven, but He thinks of us there. The glory of the upper sanctuary takes not away His heart from us, nor hinders Him from waiting upon us in our need. "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." (Eph. 5:25, 26.) This is what He is doing now, though in glory. But His love is the spring of all, and He willingly serves for the end which He has in view. Thy love, O most blessed Lord, is unwearied, in spite of all our carelessness, or even our heartlessness. We stand "clean every whit" before the face of God, through thy precious blood; and now thou art careful to maintain us in communion and service by the water of purification: but both, we know, flowed from thy wounded side. Blessed fruits of thy death for us.

Should not thy daily experience, O my soul, tend to deepen thy love and esteem for thy Lord? and should it not also lead thee to greater watchfulness and self-denial, lest thou shouldst grieve Him? "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked — to purify himself even as he is pure." How couldst thou get on one hour without Him? Think on thy many unworthy thoughts and feelings, not to speak of thy doings. And yet He keeps thee clean — "clean every whit" — clean according to the presence of God — clean according to all those relationships into which thou hast entered in Him. He girds Himself for this lowly service, though in heaven, and He restores communion and power to serve God, by the Holy Ghost and the word. Oh! wondrous,

gracious, matchless love, that can thus serve in spite of everything! “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2:1.

We now approach, through the door of the tent, to the golden altar. By regeneration we enter into an entirely new state of things. “I will wash mine hands in innocency; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord.” (Psalm 26:6.) There were two altars; the “brazen altar,” and the “golden altar.” To those, no doubt, the psalmist refers when he says, “Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.” Both were made of Shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity — the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all His work for us, and of all our blessing in Him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The over-lying shadows forth His Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory.

At the brazen altar, we see the lowly Jesus presenting Himself, of His own voluntary will, through the eternal Spirit, without spot to God. Infinite holiness and justice feed upon the ascending offering, with perfect complacency; and grace — boundless grace — flows out from the God of righteousness to the chief of sinners. It is a sweet savor of rest to God — “God is glorified in him.” And it is the ground of the believer’s relationship, acceptance, and fellowship with God and the Father.

At the golden altar, we see the once lowly Jesus crowned with glory and honor. It is now the exalted Christ in His ascended glory, whoever lives to make intercession for us. The brazen altar had no crown, but the golden altar had “a crown of gold round about.” In His humiliation He was mocked with a crown of thorns; in His exaltation He is crowned with glory.

The golden altar is the symbol of priestly worship. There is no question hereof pardon, of personal acceptance, or of sanctification. These important questions were all settled outside the house of God. Praise, thanksgiving, adoration, worship, ascend to God continually from the golden altar. Our prayers and our praises come up before God, in all the sweet fragrance of the ascending incense. When the holy fire of God tested the sweet incense “beaten small,” it found nothing there but the rich fragrance of the preciousness of Christ. But when the same fire tested Nadab and Abihu, alas! for poor fallen nature, no sweet incense was found there. “Our God is a consuming fire.” “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. “Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” O, reader, is thy peace made with God? If not, Kiss the Son — be reconciled to the Son — be friends with the Son, before the testing time with the holy fires of God’s justice come to thee. “Our God is a consuming fire.” But when the holy fire of God’s judgment tests the Son, all ascends as sweet incense. Nothing but perfection is found in the Man Christ Jesus. His Person, work, character and ways, all, all ascend to God as a sweet-smelling savor; and, oh! blessed be His name, the prayers and praises of the friends of the Son ascend, and are accepted, and shall be fragrant forever in His sweetness.

Unworthy is thanksgiving, a service stain’d with sin,

Except as Thou art living, our Priest to bear it in.

In every act of worship, in every loving deed,

Our thoughts around Thee center, as meeting all our need,
A bond that naught can sever has fix'd us on the rock, —
Sin put away forever, for all the Shepherd's flock;
And, Lord, Thy perfect fitness to do a Saviour's part,
The Holy Ghost doth witness to each believer's heart.
As dews that fall on Hermon refreshing all below,
The Spirit's holy unction doth all Thy beauty show.
Ah then, how good and pleasant to worship, serve, and love,
To rise o'er all things present, and taste the joys above.

Having thus glanced at what our beautiful Psalm alludes to, we can now better understand the exclamation of the psalmist in the fourth verse: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee." Blessed indeed, we too may exclaim, and blessed shall they be forever. They are dwellers, not visitors, in God's house. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." This is true, blessedly true, of all who trust in Jesus now. But though God's children are all priests by birth, as were the sons of Aaron, they are not all, alas priests by consecration. (See Exod. 29) Comparatively few know their priestly place at the golden altar. Many of them are doubting as to whether their sins, root and branch, were all consumed outside the camp; and, consequently, such are afraid to come within the court, and as for being assured of their full justification and sanctification in the risen One, they gravely doubt and fear that such blessedness can ever be their happy lot. Hence that state of soul which answers to priestly consecration at the laver, and happy worship at the golden altar is unknown and unenjoyed. They are not priests by consecration.

Our text is plain. "They will be still praising thee." Doubts, fears, unsettled questions, all are gone. Such cannot exist in the holy place. All, of course, who are in Christ must be, in God's account, where He is; but all who believe in Christ, do not know and believe that they are in Him, as being one with Him now. When the state of our souls answers to what is symbolized by the holy place, we can only praise. "They that dwell in thy house will be still praising thee." Then we are happily near to God, and have communion with Him, in the glorified Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

The symbols of the holy, and most holy place, speak volumes as to our perfect blessedness in Christ. On the one side, as we worship at the golden altar, before the vail, there is the table of show bread — the communion table. We are nourished with the bread of life. The incarnate, crucified, risen, and eternally living one, is the center and source of our communion. We are one with Him in resurrection. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

On the other side, there is the candlestick of pure gold, shedding its seven-fold light on the communion of saints; the center shaft of pure gold, shadowing forth Him who is the source of all light in testimony, through the power of the Holy Ghost. The rent vail reveals the ark of the

covenant; this type was Israel's grand center of old — the Antitype, Christ Himself, is ours now. In fine, the Christian is placed at the very center of God's wide circle of grace and glory, but he cannot see — he can never see its limit.

With a full heart, and a thankful heart, thou canst truly exclaim, O my soul, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." But the heart does also exclaim, Oh! why do so many still stand outside? Why do so many still prefer the wretched husks of the far country, to the fatted calf in the Father's house? Still there is room — still there is an open door — still there is a ready welcome — and still the voice of unwearied love cries — and cries to all who will listen to His voice — "Come, come, enter while there is room — him that cometh I will in nowise cast out." May God clothe with power His own word, both spoken and written, that many precious, immortal souls may be gathered in. Amen.

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are the ways of them? The great secret of strength in the ways of God, is the full assurance of His love. When we have learned the love that gave Jesus to die for us, and the Holy Ghost to quicken and teach us, we shall be content to trust the ordering of all things for our journey homewards to Him. This is the strength of God in the soul, and this alone will give good heart for the way in which He leads, be it rough or smooth. What else could make the weary pilgrim sing on his lonely way, or the martyr glorify God in the fire? True, it is the way in which the cross is found, but it is God's way — the way home, and the heart is in it.

The desires of the renewed soul, we know, can never be fully satisfied until it reaches the Father's house on high; but till then, the way thither must be the main thing with the heart. Here pause for a little, O my soul, and meditate on this great truth. It is of daily, hourly importance, see that thou understandest it well. It will give strength and courage to thy heart — decision and firmness to thy feet, and consistency to all thy path. Do, I pray thee, dwell upon it, and dismiss it not till thou hast comprehended its meaning. Forget not the blessing here given.

"Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.....

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee." Let all then who are now passing through the valley of Baca, comfort and strengthen themselves in the blessing of their God and Father. Who can explain the fullness of that word, "blessed" when thus used of Him. And think not because the great truths of this beautiful Psalm are expressed in Jewish style, that their full spiritual bearing applies not to thee. God and His love — Christ and His sympathy — the Holy Ghost and His ministry — home and the way thither, are subjects for the heart, and not confined to any particular dispensation.

God alone is the strength of His people's heart from first to last. For example, when the returning wanderer knows and counts upon his father's love, his heart will be in the way that takes him home. The road may be rough and dreary, and he may have many smittings of conscience for his past undutifulness, but the thought that his father's house is at the far end of it, is strength for the way, whatever the difficulties may be. Already he sees the overflowing of his father's heart, and the rough path is smoothed — the long way is shortened. The beautiful green lanes and flowery paths which lead in another direction have no attraction for him now. Once, alas! they had, but not

now — they lead not to home, his heart is set on his father's house.

This is the Christian's shield — unwavering confidence, in spite of everything, in the unchangeable love of God his Father. The full assurance of heart that He changeth not is the invulnerable shield of the pilgrim. To question God's love in the trial, is to drop his shield, and expose his heart to the fiery darts of the devil. Every circumstance may seem as if the Lord were chastening in anger, but faith rises above the circumstances, and affirms that it is all in perfect love. How often has the timid, though sincere, Christian, been so tempted to doubt the Father's love in the trial, that all strength for the journey seemed gone. He has felt as if he could only sit down and weep in despair.

"Is this love?" whispers the arch-fiend, to the bereaved heart. What purpose could it serve to take that loved, useful, and needed one away? Who can fill his or her place? Earth never can, you know. Is this what you call love? Can you believe that this is love to you? And the poor, weakly, bed-ridden one, he will also be sure to tempt to impatience, and to hard thoughts of God. Such are the wicked suggestions—the poisoned arrows of the enemy; and which are sure to fly thick and fast into the unguarded soul, especially at a time when the heart is overwhelmed with sorrow, or sorely tried by repeated disappointment. Nothing but the shield of faith can quench such darts of unbelief. Nevertheless, faith will always vindicate God and His truth, however heavy or sweeping the stroke. It will calmly rest in the truth, that the Father's love is the same—the same as when He gave His well-beloved Son to die on Calvary. Before such faith all enemies and temptations are powerless.

But sometimes, in trials of lesser weight, the Christian may be more off his guard, and the enemy more successful. His great object always is, to weaken the believer's confidence in the kindness of God. The way to the Father's house leads out of the world, and so it must always be a path of trial, disappointment, and difficulty. When dwelling in the house, as the psalmist says, we can only praise; but when on the way to it, we may have great conflict. Hence it is, that when we now realize, in the power of the Spirit, our oneness with Christ in the presence of God, we can only worship and adore; but when meeting the practical difficulties of life, we may have much to confess and pray for.

Take an example — a common case. The young Christian has scarcely entered on the path of obedience to the Lord, when He loses his situation. He may have filled it for years, and all went smoothly on, but his heart is now in the ways of God according to His word, and he cannot bend so easily to certain things formerly required, which he now sees have not the sanction of God's word.

Everything becomes changed to walk and act according to the word tests all. So long as the believer walks according to traditional habits, the cross is avoided. He may not think that the word condemns anything he does, but when he has been enabled to lay aside tradition, and to be guided only by the word of God, he finds out the difference. Such strictness, almost everywhere, is felt by others to be an inconvenience, and very soon unbearable. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12.

Such is often the form in which the cross has to be taken up at the present time. Nevertheless, it is a real cross, and one by which the enemy will seek to dishearten the young Christian. He may be reduced to straits, and everything may seem to go against him. His trials thicken, and all looks

dark. He begins to question if he has taken the right path — if he has really had divine guidance. Even his nearest kindred may little understand his course, and reproach him with being righteous over much. Confidence in all, save in God Himself, is now gone. What a breaking down, and sweeping away of all earthly and fleshly resources!

Now, we may say, he enters the valley of Baca; it is the place, not only of trial, but of tears. He is brought into deep exercise of soul before God. Self is judged. This is the young Christiana valley of Baca. It is the exercise of soul, rather than the trial, that makes it a well — that digs the pools. He has now found out, that a desire to live to God's glory, may turn the fairest scenes and the brightest prospects of earth into a vale of tears — a place of humiliation and sorrow. But if there be simple faith in God, the dreariest part of the desert may become a fruitful field, and where nothing but disappointment and distress were expected, the richest blessings may be found. But on the other hand, if he gets under the power of his circumstances, and is tempted to look to the world or the flesh as a resource, his tears will be yet more bitter, and more abundant. The trial, no doubt, is enough to test the strongest faith, and the bravest heart, especially if we have to wait long for the answer to our prayers. But our God will have us to confide in His love alone, and to learn what He is to us, however painful the process.

“Who passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools” This is God's way out of the world; hence the trial to nature. The great moral system of Satan in the world must be faced, and this is no easy matter. The strongest link that binds us to it, must be broken, the cord that is nearest to the heart may have to be cut asunder. Thus it is called the valley of tears. The path of many for a long way, if not all the way, is watered with tears. Scarcely has the joy of conversion been tasted, in many cases, when the pain of separation from the world in some of its tenderest associations must be experienced. And how often unfaithfulness in this respect, hinders the good work of God in the soul, and mars its sweetest joys! But the idol of the heart must be given up, and the heart unreservedly given to Christ. But now, the joy and the sorrow together break up the very fountains of the poor human heart, and every footstep is watered with tears. Thus all have a valley of Baca to pass through; it is the way to Zion. Even the most spiritual and devoted of the Lord's people must have the exercises of the valley.

Take two examples from scripture: Paul's thorn in the flesh, and the bereavement of the sisters at Bethany. 1. The thorn in the flesh was truly humbling to the great apostle. This is evident from what he says to the Galatians, “And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not.” It was something that made him despicable as a preacher. And he thought, no doubt, that it would greatly binder his usefulness; but he had to learn that the great hindrance to usefulness is the flesh. Thrice he prayed that the thorn might be removed. “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.” 2 Cor. 12

What a solemn, weighty, terrible truth this is, for all the Lord's servants! Weigh it well, O my soul, learn the badness of thy flesh — it is incorrigible! The flesh will make a bad use of God's purest mercies. Paul might have boasted that he had been in the third heavens, and that no one had ever been there but himself. But the Lord, in great mercy to His dear servant, met the danger in humbling him. Doubtless, He could have met it otherwise, but this was the way of His love and His

wisdom. O Lord, may this painful lesson be well weighed by all thy servants. The flesh, we see, in the best — in all, is only a hindrance in service. Oh! what need, my soul, to be daily judging the old nature, and to be daily growing in grace, by feeding on Christ's fullness.

The valley of humiliation and sorrow became the place of blessing to the apostle: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." When he heard these gracious words, he no longer prayed for the thorn to be taken away. Now he glories in that which had been so painful and humbling to him. "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now he rests in the love that had ordered everything for him, and on the all-sufficiency of the Lord who was with him. In fine, he found the valley to be a well of rich blessing, rain from heaven filled the pools. When caught up to the third heavens, he found the Lord there; and now while in the depths he finds the same blessed One with him there. What nearness to — what intimacy with the Lord! He knows Him on the heights and in the depths. What experience — a man in Christ in the third heavens, Christ with a man in the place of nature's weakness and sorrow! Nevertheless, Paul is in the valley of Baca, but He makes it a well, and showers from heaven fill the pools. Our blessing comes from that which has humbled us — emptied us, and taught us that difficulties and impossibilities are nothing to the Lord.

2. We turn now to the sisters in Bethany. They were much bowed down under the pressure of their circumstances. In their deep affliction they counted on the Lord's love and sympathy; they send for Him, and say, "He whom thou lovest is sick." But in place of answering their prayer according to the desires of their hearts, and with all speed, He seems rather to turn away from them, and go somewhere else. Such delays are a great trial to faith and patience. But He was teaching them to wait His time, and on Him alone. We cannot hurry Him. "When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was. Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judea again." The sisters were passing through deep waters, it was indeed a vale of tears; but

"His tears ere long shall hush that fear
For every heavy heart forever;
And we, who now His words can hear
Beyond the hills, beyond the river.
Know that as true a watch He kept
On those far heights, as at their side,
Feeling the tears the sisters wept,
Marking the hour the brother died.
No faintest sigh His heart can miss;
E'en now His feet are on the way,
With richest counter-weight of bliss

Heaped up for every hour's delay."

The Lord cannot change. Blessed, blessed truth for the sorrowing heart! But their feelings rose above their faith, and their hearts fell below their circumstances. Hence, they were disposed to blame the Lord for not coming when they sent for Him. Both Martha and Mary said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." But greater things than healing the sick, were now filling His mind and the scene before Him. He could have said the word, as on other occasions, and Lazarus would have been healed; but, no; He acts "for the glory of God, that the Son of man might be glorified thereby." And when the right time was come, He takes His place in the scene of death, in resurrection power and glory. Lazarus is dead — Israel is dead — man is dead — the sisters are bereaved and desolate. But the Lord is equal to all the need. The whole scene is filled with His glory. The bursting tomb, the rising Lazarus, radiate His glory as the Son of God. By that voice, "Lazarus, come forth," the deep caverns of the grave are pierced, and the sleeping dust awakes. What a testimony to the unbelieving Jews! What a rebuke to the unbelief of Martha and Mary — to the unbelief of us all in the time of affliction! He bestows life, raises the dead, glorifies God, and mingles His tears with the sorrowing ones. The mighty power of God, and the tenderest human affections, are perfectly displayed in this wondrous scene. Oh! what a meeting of the whole need of the heart — what a filling up of the pools — what showers of blessing from above are provided for all pilgrims, in all ages, when traveling through all parts of this vale of tears.

"O blessed solace! 'Tis a Father's rod —

No rod of wrath — but of unchanging lore.

No stroke inflicted which He could have spared!

Infinite wisdom has with love combined

To make the blow accomplish — and no more —

Its salutary end. A Father's rod!

The thought suppresses every falling tear —

Checks every murmur — mitigates each pang.

Unerring Parent! — Mourner! can you doubt

His faithfulness? Then look to Calvary!

Behold that bleeding, dying Lamb of God!

'Twas love for thee that sent Him from His throne,

And nailed Him there! And dare we entertain

The thought, that He whose nature and whose name

Is love, — could send us one superfluous pang,

Impose a needless burden, or permit

The thorn to pierce He knew would pierce in vain!

That cross becomes the blessed guarantee
That all is needed! Mercy infinite
Prevents one drop from mingling in the cup
Which could have been withheld. Thou God of love!
Vouchsafe us grace to bow beneath thy rod;
And breathe — although it be through burning tears,
And half-choked utterance — ‘Thy will be done.’”

Wells of Baca

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

Verse 7. “They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.” Blessed indeed is the way, rough or smooth, that leads to such a glorious end - before God, in Zion - the center of grace and glory. But it seems strange, at first sight, that pilgrims should find strength for such a journey in the valley of tears - the place of self-mortification. And yet, we may say, they could find it, in like manner, nowhere else. We are strengthened through faith in the risen Christ, and in reckoning our old nature as crucified by His cross. Never, until we enter into the great truth of the cross, and a risen Christ, is the strength of God perfected in us. This is the blessed teaching, though crushing work, of the valley. “When I am weak,” as the apostle says, “then am I strong.” We go, as it were, from weakness to weakness, and yet, from strength to strength. It is not merely in Paul as the Lord’s servant that this grace so wonderfully shines forth, but in his felt, conscious weakness.

This is carefully to be noted. It is worthy of thy deepest meditation, O my soul. There is no truth more practical in the Christian’s history, and none, we fear, less understood, or longer in being reached. “My strength,” says the Lord, “is made perfect,” not merely in my apostle, or in my servant, or in my disciple, but “in weakness.” There must be acknowledged weakness before there can be known strength. But, oh! what a time we are in learning even a little of this lesson, though we have a divine Teacher. Mark the great hindrance to progress from the lowest form in the school of Christ.

Why does that newly awakened soul refuse to believe God’s word, though weeping sore to know His mind? Just because self is in the way, and the work of the cross is not yet learned. Self and its feelings are treated by the anxious one as of higher authority, and more to be trusted, than the word of God. What a place to give, we may well exclaim, to mere human feelings! But how often have we heard, from the lips of such, these words, “If I could feel that I am pardoned, I would believe it.” This is vain, important, unjudged self. It sits on high, and judges everything as below it. And its distrustful nature and opposition to God have not yet been detected by the awakened soul. And, of course, while this is the case, there can be no peace, no rest, no assurance of salvation enjoyed. Dark despair, oftentimes, seems near at hand; and the darkness and the despair will be in proportion to the reality of God’s work in the soul. The more real the work, the more real the distress, if self be in the way. And this state of things must continue, so long as the voice of self is

listened to. It matters not what blessed things the Lord says to such in His word; they all go for nothing, until self be set aside as an utterly condemned thing by the cross. This is the most subtle of Satan's snares, both with young and old.

The word of the Lord is before the soul in all its plainness and fullness. It meets every case, condition, and state. The light of a cloudless sky shines on them all. But, no; it matters not. Self refuses to yield. It will readily acknowledge God's word to be true; but still says, "It is not true to me yet, for I have not experienced that change within which warrants me to believe that it is true to me." This state of mind may seem humble, but it is really pride — it is unbroken self-resisting God and His word. But the controversy must go on until self is subdued. God will never yield the point — the soul must. But that may not be until after many tears and sighs, and sleepless nights. Let us mark for a moment the struggle.

God says to the awakened, restless soul, 'Believe my word, and you shall be perfectly happy.' 'No,' replies the soul, 'first give me to feel an inward change that the word is true to me, and then I will believe it.' 'What!' God again says, 'is not my word true whatever your feelings may be! Can any inward change make my word more true than it is! Why should you ask for any token that my word is true!' But again the soul will venture to say, 'How can I believe, unless I feel?' Once more God graciously replies, 'How can you feel, unless you believe?' Thus the sorrowful struggle goes on, until self is lost sight of and the word of God received as the answer of His love to the anxious soul. He waits patiently in His love, until His word is believed without the feelings, for that is what it must come to in all, sooner or later. In some cases the struggle is short, in others it may last a life-time. This depends on the simplicity of faith; for the feelings, so much desired, can only be produced by means of the written word received into the heart. Oh! that we could persuade every weary one to have done with self, and to rest entirely on the sure word of God; then would they have rest, and peace, and joy; and then, too, they would be strong for labor in the service of Christ.

The practical importance of this point cannot be overestimated. Thousands of true believers are kept in a state of uncertainty, through looking to themselves in place of looking to Christ, or, through looking to their feelings, instead of listening to His word. And the unhappy consequence is, that they bear little testimony for Christ, and do little service for Him they are so much occupied with good-for-nothing self, that the best things are lost sight of. Thus the enemy gains an advantage. Oh, that we may ever remember, that all our blessing flows from the grace of God, and securely rests upon His word! And that word can never be truer or plainer than it is now. Of course, we shall, by and by, understand it better; but our knowledge of the word is the fruit of faith, not the ground of it. Faith bows to God's word, and sets its seal that He is true. Sweetly entering into its depths, or discovering its treasures, come afterward. We must wait on God, that He, by the Holy Spirit, may shed divine light on the infinite fullness of His own word.

"Thy faith hath saved thee," is the plain word of God to all, without exception, who come to Christ — who believe in Him. Having been brought to see our need as sinners, and to trust in Jesus, the full blessing of God is ours. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Faith believes it just because God says it, and the feelings follow. The good news fills the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory. When self has been silenced, and the word of God allowed its right place in the heart, the believer enters, in measure, into the very joys of heaven. The precious word of God will not be truer there. Therefore we ought to know our blessing now as perfectly, though not so fully,

as we shall do when enthroned and crowned in glory. But before this happy condition of soul is enjoyed, self, or the flesh, must be judged, broken, and mortified. This needed work of self-judgment must begin with conversion and never cease while we are here. It is founded on the work of the cross.

There God judged the sin of our nature, and our many actual sins. (Romans 8:3, Heb. 9:28, 1 Pet. 2:24.) We should have the same thoughts of sin and self, and Christ and the cross, as He has.

The Valley of Baca sets forth the place of blessing through deep exercise of soul. When self is broken down and distrusted, we go from strength to strength, until we appear before God in Zion. When delivered from the galling bondage of self-occupation, and the heart is happy in the liberty of Christ, we have made a fair start on our journey homewards, and great blessing will be our daily portion. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." (Ver. 5.)

In Ver. 6, we have that which characterizes the way home; "Who passing through the Valley of Baca, make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools." And in verse 8 we have the precious fruits and rich experience of the wilderness journey described. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

All the males of the tribes of Israel were commanded to appear before God in Jerusalem three times a year. The godly women, such as Hannah and Mary, though not bound by law to go, seem to have gone also. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles." Deut. 16:16.

The psalmist, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, meditates in his solitude on these journeyings. He sees, in vision, the different tribes going up to the worship of Jehovah. His heart, like the heart of every true Israelite, longs to join them. They are in the way of blessing. In this respect, the spiritual instruction of the psalm applies to the Christian as well as to the Jew. The ways of God are always ways of blessing to the soul. Doubtless these annual feasts were seasons of the deepest interest to Israel. "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem..... Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." (Psalm 122) The numbers going up to worship must have been, at times, very large. This is plain from Luke 2:44, "But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him amongst their kinsfolk and acquaintance." The many little companies meeting each other would greatly increase the general company, as they approached the city of solemnities. Brother meeting brother, and friend meeting friend, must have been the occasion of many tears, both of joy and of sorrow.

"Blessed, who, their strength on thee reclined,

Thy seat explore with constant mind,

And, Salem's distant towers in view,

With active zeal their way pursue;

Secure the thirsty vale they tread,
While, called from out their sandy bed —
As down in grateful showers distilled —
The heavens their kindest moisture yield —
The copious springs their steps beguile,
And bid the cheerless desert smile.
From stage to stage advancing still,
Behold them reach fair Zion's hill,
And prostrate at the hallowed shrine,
Adore the Majesty divine.”

As pilgrims and strangers in the valley, they met each other. They were now far from home; but they had one common feeling, one common joy, and one common hope. They were all journeying to the same glorious city — the same temple, and the same God. And great must have been their delight when, worn and weary with the wilderness, they caught a glimpse of the towers and palaces of their beloved Zion. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.” (Psalm 48) Thus it is with the Christian, through the bright gleams of his blessed hope.

“Mother of cities! o'er thy head
See peace, with healing wings out spread,
Delighted fix her stay.
How blest, who calls himself thy friend,
Success his labors shall attend,
And safety guard his way.
Thy walls remote from hostile fear,
Nor the loud voice of tumult hear,
Nor wars wild wastes deplore:
Here smiling plenty takes her stand,
And in thy courts with lavish hand
Has poured forth all her store.”

In these touching scenes of Israel's past history, we have their future glory brightly foreshadowed; and also, the Christian's present path through this world, strikingly illustrated. But there is always this great difference between the Jew and the Christian — “We walk by faith, not by sight.” The

Jews' religion was chiefly by sight. "The law is not of faith." But, alas, there is a great deal of that which is Jewish as well as Christian in many believers. Hence the large place that feelings, doings, and ceremonies have with many.

It is only by faith that we know our pardon, acceptance, and peace with God. And without the knowledge of these, there can be no strength for the journey, and no happy enjoyment of God Himself in Zion — in the riches of His grace. As all blessing flows from the grace of God, and is all founded on the cross of Christ, so it all rests on His word. And the Holy Spirit, by whom we are quickened and taught, is given in connection with faith.

"This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:2.) The great doctrine of life in Christ as unfolded by the apostle in the second chapter, and its kindred subject, "the Spirit," in the third, are both received, entered into, and enjoyed by faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Whether it be "life" or "the Spirit" — eternal life — or the witness of the Spirit; both are known, and can only be known, by faith. They are matters of revelation in the word, not merely of feelings in the soul. True, most true, the feelings will follow, and answer to the truth believed. Faith and feeling go together; but faith must always have the first place. Faith, experience, and practice form the threefold cord of practical Christianity.

Would to God we knew more of this — saw more of this Meditate thereon, O my soul, and let thy one desire be, to give a living manifestation thereof, to thy Master's glory, God grant that these three things may never be separated in His children! Bear in mind, for thyself, O my soul that wonderful word, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13.) Here, observe, and carefully note, that it is through faith in the riser, Christ, that we go from strength to strength. The risen Christ, victorious over every foe, is the strength of the Christian for his journey through this world. He has his motive to devotedness, in the once lowly Jesus, and strength for walk in the now exalted Christ of God. "He loved me and gave himself for me," is surely enough to command the entire consecration of the heart and life to Him. It is easy to give our hearts to Jesus, when once we see that He gave His heart for us. But our strength from day to day, and from one stage of our journey to another, is in the risen, triumphant, glorified Christ. Blessed Lord — my Lord — Jesus — Christ — I need thee in all thy names and titles — I need thee as my Jesus — my powerful motive for this sluggish — this carnal — ease-loving heart of mine. I need thee as my Christ on high, with every enemy beneath thy feet, and beneath mine too, as one with thee. I need thee as my Lord — my sovereign Lord — my coming Lord — my blessed hope, amidst all that would entangle and hinder me down here. O let my affections be governed, and my character formed, by my knowledge of thee as my Lord, Jesus, Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost!

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

The Christian's blessing, whether it be strength for the journey, or the enjoyment of God in the Zion above, is all by faith. This is the great principle of the believer's action, and of his whole history on the earth. His going from strength to strength, and his entering into the fullness of grace (Zion is the symbol of grace in royalty — royal grace — 2 Sam. 5), is by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence, the tone of his spiritual condition rises or falls, according to the simplicity and reality of his faith. It enters into everything — it corrects everything — it characterizes everything. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23.) If this weighty truth be duly

considered, the Christian will sometimes be brought to a halt on his journey. For the moment, at times, he has no word of direction. What is he to do? Go on without it? God forbid! This would be unlike his Lord, whoever waited till the word came. "It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." The word had not come — the Savior would not eat. What must His disciples do in such a case? Stand still. And it is often very good for the soul thus to stand still. To go on without the word, would be to go from weakness to weakness, and not from strength to strength; and, further, it would be to lose the sense of grace — royal grace. He must now wait on God — self-judgment follows — the eye becomes single — the whole body full of light, and now he goes on his way rejoicing.

The importance of the principle of faith is great, for it includes not merely justification, but the walk of the Christian in every way, both sacred and secular. So great, so minute, so practical, is this principle, that it is plainly said, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The well-known eleventh chapter of Hebrews is an illustration and proof of this, though the witnesses are selected from the Old Testament. It was by faith that the elders obtained a good report.

Here, for a little, O my soul, meditate on this deeply practical truth — a truth fraught with such important results. This will be thy health and strength in divine things. Lord, give me grace patiently to study Thy word, and implicitly to bow to its teaching. And may the light of thy Holy Spirit so shine on what Thou hast revealed, that I may see its true meaning, and its present application.

But why, it may be asked, so press this point? Do not all Christians most surely believe the Holy Scriptures? True, so far, and it is of such we speak. We are not thinking of the rationalist, but of the true Christian who believes in the plenary inspiration of scripture — in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. (1 Cor. 2:13.) But there is so much remaining, of what we may call practical unbelief, in many of God's children, that we feel constrained to press the point. It is by implicit, unquestioning faith in God's word, that we walk in the light of His countenance — that we honor the blessed Lord in His Person and work — that we live and act in the power of an ungrieved Spirit. Surely this is all important, and worthy of being pressed. Whence come all these doubts, uncertainties, and perplexities, of every shade, and on almost every subject, from the beginning to the end of many a Christian's course? Is it not because of the practical unbelief which still lurks in the heart? And are they not all unworthy of the relation of a child?

Is not the truth of God definite and unchangeable? Why then should that which we call faith be indefinite, uncertain, wavering? True, most true, the word of God demands our most patient, prayerful study, in dependence on the Holy Spirit; and it may be a long time before we understand many parts of it, if ever, in this world. Truth, though plainly revealed, is not necessarily plain, even to the spiritually minded, at first sight. Now, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part." But should our ignorance, or feeble apprehension of the truth, hinder us from believing it? When grace is at work in the soul, faith rises above all these difficulties, and lays hold on the truth, just because God has revealed it, and receives great blessing thereby. We pay but a poor compliment to the truth of God, when we refuse to receive it heartily and implicitly, because we do not understand it. This is our folly and our pride; nevertheless, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." When the doing of Christ's will, not our own, is our motive, progress will be sure, if not rapid.

"If I say the truth," answered the blessed Lord to the Jews, "why do ye not believe me?" Here our Lord appeals to the truth of His sayings as the ground of faith. It was not a question of their

intelligence, but of the truth of what He was saying. Faith, then, is the receiving as true, without question, what God declares in His word to be so. But now, have we not often, in the exercise of self-judgment, detected the absence of implicit faith in certain great truths of God's word, because we do not understand them; or, as we often say, "we cannot realize them?" But what is this, really? Is it not unbelief? Simple faith receives God's word as true — absolutely true, whether it be understood or not — realized or not.

But as the object of our meditations on this subject is strictly practical, and for the joy and strength of precious souls, we will illustrate what we mean by a few passages. And first, let us look at the well-known text — "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This is one of the very first truths that a newly awakened soul must learn, if it would make a fair start. But how feebly, alas, do many enter into these great truths, who have been many years converted! Yet nothing possibly can be plainer. But now suppose this truth to be received in the simplicity of faith, what would the effect be? Why, the full assurance, that neither sin, nor spot, remained on the soul. There would be no more conscience of sins, though "in the light, as God is in the light." The purest light of heaven detects no stain, on the blood-cleansed soul. The word of God says plainly enough "all sin," not some sin. Faith receives it as absolutely — unchangeably true, just because it is the word of God. But when the eye is turned away for a moment from the truth, something ventures to suggest the inquiry, "How can this be? how are we to understand it, seeing we are daily liable to sin, in thought, word, and deed?" That also is true, faith answers. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." But this belongs to another line of thought — to a different range of truth, and the one passage must not be brought forward to weaken the force of the other, far less to make it, as it were, untrue or uncertain. This is the working of the native, lurking unbelief of the heart, under the suggestions of Satan, and must be watched against. It is this kind of unbelief, in its many forms and degrees, that we are now seeking to detect and condemn. It is most weakening and withering to the child of God.

Be on thy guard, precious soul, lest thou shouldst be robbed of the very foundation of thy peace with God. Christ made thy peace by the blood of His cross. It is not now to make, adored and loved be His name. Honor Him with the full, unwavering confidence of thy heart. Always reason from God's heart downwards to thyself, never from the feelings of thine own heart up to Him. Hath not the Spirit of truth said, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin?" But art thou disposed to inquire, who are included in the "us" that are so cleansed? Most surely, all who believe in Jesus.

Hold fast this great truth, I pray thee. It is plain, positive, absolute, unchangeable. Suffer not the reasonings of thy natural mind, or other parts of God's word to weaken its power in thy soul. When the word has gone forth from the lips of eternal truth, it can never be broken. God has said "all sin" — believe it. It may be difficult to understand or to explain — it may be opposed to thine own experience — it may be different from much that thou hast learned from other quarters — it may break to pieces some favorite system of doctrine which thou hast been building up. Well, never mind, let all the rest go. Nothing can either be true or good that contradicts the truth of God. Weigh well the thought — the precious truth — there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Be not afraid to rest upon it — to proclaim it — to affirm it. Were the heavens over thy head to open, and their full light to shine into thy soul — were every accuser from beneath to beset thee round, and count up thy many sins; and wert thou to appear as a

witness against thyself — what then? No refuge could be found either in reasonings or in feelings at such a moment; but faith could rise in the full strength of God's word, nothing daunted, either by the unsullied light of heaven, or by the threatening darkness of hell, and affirm in the confidence of truth — my sins are all forgiven — they are all cleansed away: God sees none — faith sees none — not even a trace of them remains behind. "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This is God's view and God's statement of my case. He can explain it: I am not hound to do so: but I am bound to believe it. And I know, and do proclaim that there is no limit to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. Couldst thou, O mine enemy, find out many more sins against me — millions more, my answer is, all that thou canst write under the head of sin, is gone — yes, and gone forever. The light of heaven is my witness. God have all the glory — the blood of Christ have all the credit, I am "in the light as he is in the light." "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" — not to heaven merely, but to God. This is faith, implicit, unquestioning faith in God's word, and nothing more than He is entitled to from all His children. But, oh! what a bright and blessed type of Christianity we should see, compared with what we often meet with, were this the case. We turn now to another passage:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1.) We ask ourselves, we ask the christian reader — How far have we entered into the wondrous truth of these words — "In Christ Jesus! We believe it, of course, and bless God for it j but who could explain it, save on the principle of faith; and who could receive it, save on the same principle? But even faith, if mixed in any measure with reason, or governed by feelings, is greatly enfeebled in its apprehension and enjoyment of the truth. Remaining unbelief mars the blessing. Reason is totally blind here. Nothing but implicit faith receives, grasps, enjoys, the blessed truth.

But all is plain and simple to unquestioning faith. If a child puts his ball in a drawer, he knows where it is, and how safe it is. When God says the Christian is in Christ, he ought to know where he is and how safe he is. God cannot be mistaken, neither can faith. And if Christ be at God's right hand in heaven, the Christian, in God's sight, is there is the Christian. And surely, in spite of everything, the truth of God ought to be received without a question. Besides, God graciously condescends to explain to us how this is. The second verse explains the first. "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Christ is our life, but He is in resurrection, and free from the law of sin and death. The death and resurrection of Christ wrought the great deliverance for His people. The believer makes this marvelous blessing individual. He does not say, observe, "Hath made" them free, or us free, but "me free." This is enjoyed, happy liberty. It is the voice of triumph. Now I am free — free as the power of the risen life in Christ can make me — free from the law of sin and death. My standing is no longer in the first, but in the last Adam. Hence the apostle says, verse 9, "Ye are not in the flesh," or in the first Adam state; but "in Christ Jesus," or in the last Adam state. Oh! what words are these — "Hath made me free" — yes, "me." I, who was once the miserable man in the seventh chapter, am now the happy man in the eighth - happy in Christ, as the risen, ascended, and glorified Man. God has said it, faith receives it, and the heart enjoys it.

We might select many other passages in illustration of our subject, but we must leave the christian reader to follow up in his own private meditations this profitable exercise. Let him, for example, examine how far he has entered into the meaning of such passages as, "Hath raised us up

together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;" "Because as he is, so are we in this world;" "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Eph. 2:6; 1 John 4:17; Gal. 2:20.

We now return to our instructive Psalm, and meditate, for a little, on the contrast between the Jew and the Christian, as therein suggested.

The Israelites required to leave their homes, and journey through the valley, in order to appear before God in Zion the city of David. This was their place of worship. But it may be said of the Christian, that he is toiling through the valley, and reposing on Mount Zion, at the same time. Such are the mysteries of faith. As a matter of fact, he is in the world; as a matter of experience, he is in the wilderness; as a matter of faith, he is in heaven. Take an example.

A young Christian may continue to live in the same family after he is converted, that he lived in before his conversion. But how changed to him everything is! The blood of the Lamb is on the door-posts of his heart, and he is separated from the world, though still in it. But he can no longer take part in the worldly ways of the family. In following Christ he has become a witness for Him, and this is unbearable. He is blamed for carrying things too far; all sympathy between him and the family is gone; now he is an alien in his father's house. This is wilderness experience, and sometimes bitter enough. But amidst it all, he knows his oneness with Christ in heaven, and feeds on Him there. He finds, as it were, that Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan, are all under the same roof. But with these, he finds the blessed Lord divinely suited to each. His knowledge of Christ greatly increases. He knows that he is sprinkled with the blood, and thereby sheltered from the world's judgments; the cloud, the manna, and the living water, as suited to the desert, are with him; and he also feeds on the old corn of the land. His motives — his resources — his way of life, are unknown to his own family. Faith only can understand the Christian's position in this world.

Here let thy thoughts dwell for a little, O my soul. What knowest thou, experimentally, of these things? The matter is plain, and must be the experience of all, if the heart be for Christ ONLY. Christ is not in this world; and if the Christian has given up the world for Christ, what has he here? Nothing. What can be plainer? If he has given up all on earth for Christ in heaven, he can have nothing here. This is the Christian's position in the world. He is a stranger and desolate as to the resources of earth. All must come from Christ, who is now his all and in all. Fellow-pilgrims are his companions, and heaven is his resource. Hence he lives and walks by faith. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." But the resources of faith are boundless. It lays its hand on the richest treasures of heaven, and says, these are mine — mine in the rights of Christ — mine now — mine forever. Such is faith; it lays hold on every good thing. Nothing is hidden from it — nothing is kept from it. "What grace unfolds, faith appropriates, the heart enjoys, and the life displays. Would to God it were more so — always so! but that is the principle. "All things are yours.....ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." 1 Corinthians 3:21-23.

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

The terra "Zion," in the verse before us, is one of so much interest and importance, that it demands a special notice. And the more so because it is often used by ecclesiastical writers, as descriptive of the Church, or as synonymous with the expression, "Church of God." This we believe is a mistake. It is the chosen seat of royalty during the millennial reign of Christ. The order of events

connected with the advancement of David as God's elected and anointed king, throws much light on the order of events in that yet future and glorious day. "They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Whether we view the hill of Zion historically, as in connection with David; or, devotionally, as in the Psalms; or, prophetically, as the throne of the Messiah's kingly power and glory — it is a place of great interest and significance.

It is first mentioned in connection with the history of David, when he became king over all Israel. "Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David." (2 Sam. 5:7.) The Philistines were still in the land, and the people of Israel were in the lowest condition possible. They had chosen a king after their own hearts, and now they were smarting keenly for it. Samuel had faithfully warned them, and foretold what the state of things would be, under their self-chosen king. But they refused his counsel, and said, "Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like the nations." (1 Sam. 8) Such is the obstinacy of self-will: and none are so deaf to all good counsel, or so blind to danger, as self-willed people. "We will have a king over us." Surely this was daring and dangerous ground! So it was, and it ended in the most overwhelming disasters. And such must ever be the result, when the unbroken will is allowed to act. Alas! that the Christian should ever be found, in any sphere of life, thus set on having his own will!

The Jews had not that bright, living example before them that we have. The Master whom we follow could always say, "Lo, come, to do thy will, O God.....Not my will, but thine be done." Besides, what happened to Israel because of their willfulness, has been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Be warned then, O my soul — beware of seeking thine own will. It is always wrong. Besides, remember how blinding and hardening it is. Eyes, ears, reason, affection — all are closed and sealed up, that the will may have its own way. How often it yields not, even in the presence of impending ruin, and to the most earnest pleadings of friendship. Meditate in the view of these things, O my soul, on the path of the obedient One. Follow Him. He hath left us an example that we should walk in His steps. God's will only is good. Thou wilt never seek thine own will in heaven — why here? But should the Lord suffer thee to have it, as He did Israel of old, it may be for thy sore chastening, that thou mayest learn to say, "Not my will, O Lord, but thine be done." Rather let thy prayer be, "Grant unto me, O Lord, in thy mercy, a subject will, a chastened spirit, a tender conscience, a subdued heart, for thine own name's sake."

"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.

"All that God blesses is our good,

And unblest good is ill;

And all is right that seems most wrong,

If it be His sweet will."

Israel could scarcely have been in a state of greater confusion and ruin, than when David established his throne on Mount Zion. Both the kingly and priestly departments of the nation were in great disorder. The sanctuary was defiled — the priesthood corrupted — the ark of God in captivity, and “Ichabod” written on the whole scene — the glory had departed. For this terrible state of things there was no hope — no resource in Israel. But God in mercy interposes. He calls out David, a man after His own heart. He awakes, as it were, out of sleep. The language of Psalm 78, on this particular point, is remarkable. “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts; he put them to a perpetual reproach. Moreover, he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion, which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established forever. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes great with young, he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.”

Saul was a king after the people's will, David after God's heart. Not that David always acted according to the heart of God; but he was chosen of Him. David, alas! failed, and failed grievously; and needed the mercy and forgiveness of God. Nevertheless, we often find the heart of David responding to the heart of God in a very blessed way. And who ever felt his sin more keenly than David, or confessed it more fully? Or whoever counted more thoroughly on the goodness of God for pardon and restoration? In short, he understood in a remarkable way, the heart of God, and the grace that dwells there.

After David had taken possession of Jerusalem, the Philistines viewed him with jealousy. He inquires of the Lord, follows divine directions, goes out to battle, and gains signal victories over them. God is with him. He directs the movement of his army. The people, under David as their leader, triumph over their enemies. A great deliverance is wrought in Israel. The downward course of things is stayed, and Zion becomes the hope of the people — the resting place of faith. The grace of God has done it. The people are greatly blessed. They find out that it is better to follow the Lord's will than their own.

David becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, not only in His rejection and suffering, but in His victories. The Lord will make war with His enemies, immediately before the establishment of the millennial kingdom. The Lord will descend from heaven for the destruction of Antichrist, and those confederated with him; but, like David, after His throne is established in Zion, there will still be enemies outside of the land of Israel to subdue. “The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.” (Ps. 110.) And also, as under David, the people triumphed over their enemies, so will they under Christ. “For the Lord of Hosts hath visited his flock, the house of Judah, and hath made them as his godly horse in the day of battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord.” Zech. 10:3-7.

All this, clearly enough, is future. It must take place after the appearing of the Lord in glory, and before the Solomon character of His reign is established. The early part of Christ's reign will be the antitype of David's — the warrior king; Solomon typifies Christ reigning in millennial peace and glory. But we cannot pursue this subject at present, we must return to David.

Another thing now fills and occupies his mind. He was a man of faith before God, as well as a man of power before his enemies. His throne was now established in power on Mount Zion, but the ark of God still dwelt in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. The ark of the covenant was the visible link of God's relationship with the people. Hence the loss of the ark was the "Ichabod" of Israel. And now, having prevailed over his enemies, and united all Israel under his scepter, his heart longs to restore the ark to the tabernacle which he had pitched for it on the hill of Zion. Here the faith and piety of David shine most brightly; and never in stronger contrast with the house of Saul. Michal, like her father, cared nothing in heart for the glory of God. But David rejoiced to humble himself before the Lord, and reproves Michal in the strongest way. He cared for the glory of God, and the welfare of His people. Neither Michal nor her father's house cared either for the one or the other. They never understood the claims of the God of Israel. They thought only of themselves. But how different it was with David! At the prospect of the ark entering the city his heart leaps with joy. But if we would know more fully the feelings of David on this occasion we must study carefully Psalm 132. There the Spirit of God records them, as an everlasting memorial, of his devotedness to God and to His people! He danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. And they brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to everyone a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. So all the people departed everyone to his house." 2 Sam. 6.

This was a glorious day for Israel. The long dark night of "Ichabod" had passed away. The connection between God and His people was again re-established. The bonds of the covenant were restored. The presence, power, and glory of the God of Israel are now with the nation. The people are greatly blessed. They have seen a sample of the glory, and tasted the blessings of the Melchizedek reign. David acts as priest. He wears the linen ephod. He is the head of the people. And now, the throne of the king and the ark of God are both established on Mount Zion. Hence it is that Zion acquires such an immense importance ever after. It becomes God's center in the holy land: there the tribes of Israel are gathered together, every one of them appearing before God in Zion. It is also the standing witness to all nations, of the activities of God's love on behalf of His people, when all was lost under law. This is the grand principle of Zion; and thereby, it becomes to faith, the divine guarantee of what God will do for His people in the latter day. This is clear from Rev. 14 — "And I looked, and, 10, a Lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads." The suffering, God-fearing remnant of the latter day, will be associated with the Messiah in His kingly glory, as the faithful in Israel were with David of old. The center of His dominion and glory is the Mount Zion which He loved. There the Lamb shall reign, and they follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Bright,

blessed, glorious reward, for sharing His rejection — for patiently waiting, in holy separation from the world, for His coming!

“He, who with hands uplifted, went from this earth below, Shall come again all gifted, His blessing to bestow.”

Here, O my soul, bow, worship, meditate. Thou art in the presence of a greater than David, and of one better known to thy heart. He is thy Lord, worship thou Him. In type, principle, and detail, learn of David. Himself and his history at this part are full of Christ. Mark the order of events, and learn thereby something of that which is yet to come. The end may be near; faith says it surely is. Then, O wondrous thought, thou wilt be more than a student of the past; thou wilt have thy part in the scene. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him, in glory.” (Col. 3:4.) But knowest thou meantime, O my soul, thy christian privileges? We have come to Zion now. By faith, in spirit, we are already come to Mount Zion. Sinai is the type of man’s responsibility, Zion of God’s grace. What a difference! “But ye are come unto Mount Sion — and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem — and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly — and to the Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven — and to God the judge of all — and to the spirits of just men made perfect — and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant — and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Heb. 12:22-24.

What are these many glories to which we are come — into which grace has introduced us? we may well exclaim. Blessed, indeed, are all they who have believed in Christ now, and who are now brought in Him, into all this wondrous glory! Such is the present portion of all who trust in Jesus. The Lord grant to any who may read this paper, to feel their need of Christ, and to be without rest or peace until they find both in Him. He waits to be gracious, why should any refuse such a portion? Look again, dear reader, at these verses in Heb. 12. To know now, even now, that we are come to all this — that we are interested in all this, and that there is no fear of things going wrong in heaven, as they have done in Israel, is the souls present rest, peace, joy, and happiness. Surely it is no small matter to belong now to the Church of the first-born ones, whose names are registered in heaven! The Church is blessed in Christ and with Christ, and all who are converted now, are called, not only to the nuptial glories of the Lamb, but to the eternal blessedness of the Bride the Lamb’s wife.

Know then, I pray thee, thy need as a lost sinner now — think of the love of Jesus in dying for such — for thee. Dost thou prefer thy sins and this world, to forgiveness and Christ? Oh! if such be the case what must the end be? Plainly, my dear reader, dost thou prefer the pains of hell forever, to that place of peculiar honor, blessedness, and affection, to which the Church of the first-born are called. What! prefer the blackness of darkness forever, to the light and holiness of heaven! No. I am well aware thou wouldst not say so, in so many words. But do not actions speak louder than words? Break, O break, at once and forever, with everything that would keep thee from Christ. Love Him — trust Him — follow Him — serve Him. To whom wouldst thou give thy heart, if not to Him who first gave Himself for thee?

Note. — Psalm 2 shows us the king set upon the holy hill of Zion, the Son of God, begotten in time (a truth apart from His relationship as Son, one with the Father before the world was; a doctrine taught in John 1, Heb. 1, Col. 1, and elsewhere), owned as such by the Lord, and the kings of the

earth charged to submit to Him. Psalm 8 speaks of Him as the Son of man, to whom all things are subjected, according to the eternal purpose of God. In Psalm 110, He who had been despised and rejected, being seated at the right hand of God, is to rule in the midst of His enemies.

Compare Psalm 24 and 102. In the first, He is acknowledged as the Lord of Hosts, the King of glory, after having conquered His enemies; in the second as the Creator Himself.

J. N. D.

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

Ver. 8. "O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer; give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah." The weary pilgrim is at length before God in Zion. Blessed journey that has such an end! And blessed be the God of Jacob, that the pilgrim has now and then, even on the journey, sweet foretastes of that happy end; but, oh! what will it be when it is fully tasted in glory — in the Father's house on high! Till then, O my soul, fail not to drink at the fountain, though traveling through a dry and thirsty land. Faith is as welcome now in those courts above, as thou thyself wilt be at the journey's end. Thy title is as good now as it will be then — the name of Christ can never be more welcome than it is today. Oh! then, use thy title now — let heaven see what great and constant use thou canst make of that blessed name now.

In musing on these words, a solemn thought crosses the mind — Zion, or grace, is the meeting-place of God and His people. Every child of Adam, sooner or later, must meet God on one of two grounds: — the ground of righteousness or the ground of grace. No one can escape, or pass unnoticed in a crowd. Each one must individually, and for himself, appear before God. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Rom. 14:12.) Most solemn thought, surely! But if on the ground of righteousness, all must be lost — forever lost. Who could answer to God for one of a thousand of his many thousand sins? Hence the psalmist prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Psalm 143:2.) Human reasoning would not avail there. But no man, even now, ever reasons in the presence of God. Clearly then, on the ground of righteousness, the soul must be hopelessly lost. God grant, that my dear reader, through faith in Christ, may pass from death unto life now, and so never come into judgment. John 5:24.

Grace, pure grace, is the only other ground. There is no middle ground in scripture. And he who stands before God on this ground is safe forever. He is saved with God's great salvation. What he previously was, is not thought of. He is now a true believer in Christ Jesus. He honors the Savior with the confidence of his heart; and in God's sight, there is nothing too good for him. He honors him in the fullest and most public way. In short, he is blessed according to the riches of divine grace, and the value of the work of Christ. He fares well; yes, as well as Christ Himself! As the bride ranks with the bridegroom — as the wife ranks with the husband, so does the Christian rank with Christ in heaven. He is joined unto the Lord and one spirit with Him. Happy they who are thus done with their own works, and trust only in the finished work of Christ. But tell me, O my soul, in plain terms, what is the difference today, between a soul that is on the ground of grace, and one that is on the ground of righteousness? Practically, the one trusts in Christ, the other trusts in himself. This is the great difference, really, between the saved and the unsaved — the Christian and the worldling. It is connection by faith with the Person of Christ that makes the difference. The

one may be as full of outward religious observances as the other, but unless the heart be connected with the Person of Christ, these go for nothing. Were a school-boy to cover his slate with ciphers, not one of them could be reckoned, until he had connected them with a figure, then they would all count. Even so, a cup of cold water given in connection with the name of Christ shall have its eternal reward.

He who has felt his need and helplessness, and trusts in Christ alone, is on the ground of the pure favor of God; but he who is still a stranger to this state, however full of good works, charities, and religious duties, is on the ground of inflexible righteousness. The tree must first be made good before the fruit can be good. We must be engrafted into the living Vine, and drink of the fatness of its roots, before we can bear fruit to God. Christ only can bear fruit to God; but as the tree bears fruit through its branches, so Christ bears fruit to God through His members.

Awful indeed must be the meeting between God and the sinner on the ground of righteousness. When the plumb-line is laid to a crooked wall, it does not make it straight, but it shows out all its crookedness. The judgment-seat will prove the sinner's condition, but it can show him no favor. The day of grace is past. It is too late to cry for mercy — yes, alas! Too late when the sentence, "Depart from me" is uttered — too late when the gates of heaven are closed — too late when the gates of hell are opened — too late when Satan whom he has served claims him as his — too late when enclosed within those fiery walls whence none ever escape! Oh! what an end for an immortal soul! The very thought of it is overwhelming. The soul shudders in writing it. Oh! what can be done now to prevent it? is the first feeling of the heart. And, yet, what can we say? The only thing that can prevent it is done already. Redemption is accomplished. Jesus died and rose again. The sure foundation of grace and glory has been laid in Zion, and whosoever believeth thereon shall never be confounded. "Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," are plain words; who can misunderstand their meaning? The jailor believed on the Lord Jesus Christ — he trusted in Him according to the word of the apostle, and was saved, and others of his household who believed. The gospel is the same today as it was then; whosoever believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.

Lord of the harvest, send more laborers into the gospel-field; and grant, Lord, that thy preachers may never lose sight of the solemn results of their preaching! Surely, if preachers themselves were more alive to the awful future of a Christless soul, they would be more in earnest, and more would be awakened by their warning voice. The end is near, the time is short, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh; and souls — many souls — are perishing.

Let thy word, O Lord, be clothed with power from on high, that it may be more effectual in them that hear it; and fill thine evangelists, blessed Lord, with a burning desire — a consuming passion for the salvation of sinners. With the fearful end of their unawakened hearers in view, may they speak plainly, pointedly, boldly, earnestly, and affectionately: and may their constant prayer be, 'Lord, suffer not even one precious soul to depart unimpressed, unawakened, unsaved.'

"Oh! speak of Jesus — of His grace,

Receiving, pardoning, blessing all;

His holy, spotless life to trace —

His words, His miracles recall.
The words He spoke, the truths He taught,
With life, eternal life, are fraught.
“Oh, speak of Jesus — of His death:
For sinners such as we He died.
Tis finished, with His latest breath,
The Lord, Jehovah Jesus, cried.
That death of shame and agony
Opened the way of life to me.”

While meditating on the happiness of those who had reached Mount Zion, and were before God in His holy temple, the psalmist breaks forth in fervent prayer and praise. He was longing to enjoy the same privileges himself. “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord.” How often this has been the experience of the people of God when deprived of the public means of grace so called. There is divine reality in the fellowship of saints. “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord.” There is spiritual refreshment and blessing in meeting with those we love in the spirit. Ere long we shall meet in heaven to part no more, and to love each other perfectly.

The mere formalist, of course, knows nothing of these exercises, but the psalmist was the opposite of a formalist. His whole heart was in the temple-worship of God; and he enters into it, in spirit, though, perhaps, in exile. He praises God, but owing to his position, his praise turns into prayer. “O Lord of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob.”

There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of divine majesty, and the consciousness of divine relationship. As “Lord of hosts,” He is almighty in power; as the “God of Jacob,” He is infinite in mercy and goodness to His people. The Jew could depend on the covenant-faithfulness of Jehovah; we, on the name of “Father” in connection with Christ. There was power to protect in the Valley of Baca; and, sweeter still, grace to bless on the holy hill of Zion. It is there the happy worshipper loses sight of self, and of all the troubles and trials of the way, and rejoices in the blessed consciousness of his relationship with the living God.

As Christians, we have “received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” We are thus taught and led by the Holy Ghost Himself, to use the sweet expression of our relationship — Father. This is our happy place now through the riches of sovereign grace. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Gal. 4:6.) Only yesterday, as it were, we were far off from God, and seeking happiness apart from Him, but He has had mercy — great mercy, blessed be His name, and brought us to Himself through faith in Christ Jesus. And now the children’s place and the children’s portion are ours — ours today — ours henceforth and forever. Only think, O my soul, on that wondrous word, which has gladdened so many hearts, “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of

God through Christ." Meditate, I say, on this great truth — on these very words — "no more" "Thou art no more a servant, but a son" — and "an heir" — "an heir of God." Not merely, observe, an heir of heaven, or of glory, but "an heir of God through Christ." Oh! wondrous truth! The possessions of God are thine. And mark, too, I pray thee, that the Spirit is not speaking here of what we shall be, but of what we now are. "Thou art no more a servant, but a son." Marvelous place — blessed privilege — glorious liberty! We can only worship and adore; nothing can be added to our possessions. His name alone have all the praise and glory. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure." 1 John 3:1 - 3.

Once as prodigals we wandered in our folly far from thee;
But thy grace o'er sin abounding, rescued us from misery:
Thou the prodigal hast pardoned, 'kissed us' with a Father's love:
'Killed the fatted calf,' and called us e'er to dwell with thee above.
"Clothed in garments of salvation, at thy table is our place;
We rejoice, and thou rejoicest, in the riches of thy grace.
'It is meet,' we hear thee saying, we should merry be and glad,
I have found my once lost children, now they live who once were dead."

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

Verse 9: "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed" What marvelous words are these! In writing them down they have touched a chord in the heart, which awakens deep thoughts and feelings. The combination is beautiful and blessed — "our Shield" — "Thine Anointed." God and the soul are brought near to each other. Their object, their center, is One — "our" — "thine." Both are looking to the same Christ, though from different points of view. He is God's Anointed, He is thy Shield, O my soul! Dwell on this blessed theme. Precious Savior! He glorifies God — reconciles the sinner, and unites both in Himself. "I in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14,17.) Blessed union — fruitful in eternal unity and glory!

Never before, O my soul, hast thou so seen or felt the power of this verse; and now, happily, patiently, deeply, meditate thereon, I pray thee; while the fire buns concentrate thy musings on this great truth. Think on the many blessings which flow from thy privileged place. All favor, all security, all happiness, both for time and eternity, are found therein.

But especially would I say, Meditate on Him who thus links every believer with God, and the valley of Baca with the courts above. He who is the Father's delight — the One on whom He ever looks with perfect complacency, is every believer's hiding place — is thy hiding place. There thou art sheltered from every storm in this life; and there, too, as behind an invulnerable shield, thou art safe forever. No enemy can ever break through thy sure defense. They may threaten, but can do

no more. Only watch thou, and never wander from thy hiding place. Thy only security is to keep behind the shield. Thou hast all there.

“What in thy love possess I not?

My star by night, my sun by day,

My spring of life when parched with drought:

My wine to cheer, my bread to stay,

My strength, my shield, my safe abode,

My robe before the throne of God!”

While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ Himself. It is the knowledge of His Person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, “Look upon the face of thine Anointed.” We cannot always say, Look on us; but we may always say, Look on Him. In deepest sorrow through conscious failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to His name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with Him — ever occupied with Him as risen from the dead and exalted to His own right hand in heaven; and He would have us also to be occupied with Him as the heart’s exclusive object.

True faith can only rest on God’s estimate of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality. The one rests in God’s estimate of Christ, the other in his own. The one trusts in Christ, the other trusts in himself. But, oh! how wide the difference between the two in God’s sight! and, alas, how wide will be the difference forever, if no change takes place! As to thyself, dear reader, on what is thy faith — thy hope resting? See, I beseech thee, that the word of the living God is the solid rock on which all thy expectations are built; and as one lost and ruined under sin, see that thou art looking to Jesus as thy Savior, and resting on the word of His grace. This is saving faith. It listens only to God.

Take an example — It is on God’s testimony to the good of Christ that the conscience rests with a perfect rest, in spite of all that it feels working within; and it is only His testimony to the Person of Christ that keeps the heart peaceful and happy in spite of all circumstances. What God says must hold good and true independently of all perplexing circumstances without, and of all contrary feelings within. Thus faith argues, and argues fairly, and walks in fellowship with God. When He proclaims from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;” the voice of faith from earth responds, “This is my beloved Savior, in whom I am well pleased.” The voices meet and agree in One. This is communion! Oh! wondrous, gracious, glorious truth! The Lord’s name alone have all the praise!

Yet one look more at this precious ninth verse, before passing on to the tenth. The thoughts love to linger over the many lines of truth which it suggests. It begets meditation. And still the leading thought is — God looks for the believer to have the same thoughts of Christ as He has Himself.

But this is the work of the Holy Spirit. We only know Christ in the proportion that He is revealed unto us by the Spirit. Hence the unspeakable importance of understanding the scriptures on this point; and of giving the Holy Spirit His right place both in our hearts and ways. "For he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." (John 14:17.) When this leading truth of the present period is either overlooked or practically displaced, there must be great darkness and feebleness as to the Person of Christ. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." "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 will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." 1 Cor. 12:3; 2:11; John 16:13, 14.

The great object, we believe, of the Holy Spirit's work in us, is to make good in our hearts the thoughts of God concerning Christ. This is the basis of the Christian's walking in the light as God is in the light, and of worshipping Him in Spirit and in truth. Indeed, all hinges, practically, on this state of soul. Our consistency, spirituality, steadfastness, devotedness, and happiness, are intimately connected with it. When the heart is right with Christ, both the judgment and the practice will be right. The affections govern the judgment. God's way of delivering souls from all evil, both inwardly and outwardly, is Christ. Our only strength is in being filled with Him. Light on the path, and strength to walk therein, flow from this.

Is it not ignorance of Christ that leads the unconverted around us to act so contrary to Him? And on the other hand, is it not the knowledge of Christ that leads to a life of holiness and practical godliness? And just in proportion as the Christian enjoys Christ, does he live above self and the world. And farther, it is only in being occupied with Christ, as He is before God, in all His loveliness, that we grow up into His likeness. This is the principle; If we would love Him more, we must be more occupied with His love to us — if we would serve Him better, we must be more occupied with His devotedness to us — if we would get rid of our spiritual deformities, we must be more occupied with His loveliness. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18.

But, alas! how often it happens, that even true, earnest Christians are strangers to this line of truth, this character of exercise, and this fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is a constant tendency in such to be occupied with a sense of inward evil in place of Christ; consequently, darkness, feebleness, a lack of communion as to Christ, must be the result. Discouraged and cast down from what takes place within, they are filled with doubts and fears. They think the heart ought to get better, and not have so many bad thoughts as it once had. Most true, the Christian has to judge himself daily and hourly for everything that is contrary to Christ. But he has also another lesson of great practical importance to learn, namely, he has to learn what flows from Christ, and what flows from himself. There is no good thing in nature, and no good thing can ever come from it. "In me," says the great apostle, "(that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Every good thing cometh down from above. But we are slow to learn that there is nothing good towards God in our nature, and that nothing good in His sight can ever come from it.

We must live Christ if we would please God, and walk in fellowship with Him; but we must first learn Him. He is our lesson. Oh! that we could impress all our readers and ourselves, more deeply, with the importance of this great truth! "To learn Christ — and to live Christ." "For me to live is Christ," says the apostle, and in writing to the Ephesians he says, "But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus." This is our lesson, — the wide range of truth as brought out and set in the light of heaven, in connection with the lowly Jesus on earth, and the exalted Christ in heaven. This, I repeat, is our lesson! He is the way, the truth, and the life. The character, the reality, the truth, of everything was tested by His presence on earth. All truth meets in His Person. But most and best of all, by Him we know God and are happy: and in Him as the risen, exalted, and glorified Christ, we know, and still learn more and more of our privileges and blessings in the presence of God. "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine Anointed."

"When the hours of day are closing,

And the sun has reached the west,

Sweetly in thy love reposing,

I would lay me on thy breast.

Jesus Lord, I thirst for thee,

Thou art all in all to me.

Thou hast taught me of the union

Of my new born soul with thee,

And in hours of deep communion

Thou hast spoken, Lord, to me.

Jesus, now I thirst for Thee,

Thou art all in all to me."

Verse 10. "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" Those who only know the pleasures of the tents of wickedness, can have no proper conception of the true, solid, lasting pleasures of the courts of the Lord. Those who know both can speak positively of the difference. Who that has spent a day with God in spirit, and in the varying exercises of meditation and devotion, cannot speak of its blessedness? But the testimony of scripture on the subject is full, and safer to judge from.

The Spirit of truth, by Solomon, has said, "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity." (Eccles. 7:6) Noisy, empty, sparkling, it may be, for a moment, and then extinguished forever. Such, alas! is the character of the so-called pleasure in the tents of wickedness. But what shall we say of the fearful condition of those who are feeling the sharp sting of sin after the pleasure is gone? Is it not misery — great misery, even in this life? but, oh! what must it be when all its bitterness is felt in the place where hope never enters. The

remembrance of those shallow, short-lived pleasures of earth will afford no relief there.

But we turn to the other and brighter side of the question, and there we read of something very different — may this be the happy portion of all who read these lines! “In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalm 16:11.) Which, now, dear reader, may I ask, do you prefer? Eccles. 7:6 is as true as Psalm 16:11. But the path of life in the latter, and the path of folly in the former, are as wide apart as heaven and hell. Which, think you, my dear reader, is the nobler, higher, manlier, worthier, wiser path? The boisterous, hollow, unmeaning mirth of the worldling, or the calm, real, lasting joy of the Christian? Do you hesitate? Need you hesitate? The Lord enable you to choose the better part — the part that shall never be taken from you. This itself is no small comfort to the believer. “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” (Luke 10:42.) We may not always enjoy or value the good part as we ought to do, but it shall not be taken away from us. God says it, and that is enough to faith.

Besides, the same blessed truth is plainly taught in our text: “In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” What a wonderful place and portion we have here! The Lord’s name be praised. What a field for meditation! Enter it, my soul, I pray thee; come and meditate with spiritual power on these wonderful words — “Thy right hand” — the place of dignity, power, and special privilege. “Fullness of joy” — nothing lacking — “all spiritual blessings.” “Pleasures for evermore.” Not only is it the place of honor and joy, but it is our everlasting place — “for evermore.” “Pleasures for evermore.” No alloy — no fear of these pleasures ever coming to an end — they are “for evermore.”

Better, surely, better far, be in the humblest condition as to this life, with the knowledge of Jesus, than be the greatest and most exalted monarch that ever sat upon a throne, without the knowledge of Jesus. From the lowest ranks in this life, faith aspires to the highest enjoyments in heaven. It is high-born, high-souled, high in its aspirations, and high in its destinies. It affirms that one day — a single day, spent in the house of God, is better far, than a thousand spent in the tents of wickedness. And if it be so now, O, what must it be hereafter! Then the faithful in Christ Jesus shall ascend to the house of many mansions, where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore. But, alas, alas, those who preferred the tents of wickedness to the company of the godly during their earthly days, can have no part or lot with them, in those abodes of unmingled, never-ending blessedness. May the Lord, in His rich grace, prevent such a fearful end in the ease of all who read these meditations! And to His name alone be all the praise and glory.

Meditations on the Eighty-Fourth Psalm

Verses 11, 12. “For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory · no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.” We have now come to the close of our beautiful and instructive Psalm. Precious indeed, and most practical are the many lines of truth which, it has suggested for meditation. The Lord in His mercy grant that they may neither be overlooked nor forgotten. Under the head of “Tabernacles,” we have dwelt on the usual occupations of a Lord’s Day, and on the mixed multitudes that throng the various places of worship. The attractions of the world, the dangers of delay in the concerns of the soul, the full gospel, the blessedness of the saved, and the misery of the lost, have also been before us. Oh! that what has been written may be the means of blessing to many, but especially to many mere formal, Christ less professors, and to many poor careless

sinners. The Lord knows how much they have both been on the writer's heart through it all. May all who have read, or who may yet read, these pages, be brought to Jesus, and blessed with God's great salvation!

We also pray, that the Lord may bless these meditations abundantly, to many of His dear pilgrim saints who are now passing through the valley of Baca. Young Christians just entering on their heavenly way have been especially thought of. The Lord in His tender love and care watch over them, keep them, and bless them. The offense of the cross has not yet ceased. But, the Lord be praised, there are still wells in Baca, and a glorious Zion in prospect. May the faith, hope, patience, and courage of thy beloved ones, most gracious Lord, be kept strong in Thyself, until they have passed the vale of tears, and safely reached the Mount Zion of Thy love and glory!

Like our former Twenty-third Psalm of sweetest and most cherished remembrance, the Eighty-fourth closes in heavenly brightness. In the Twenty-third, the believer ends his journey amidst the grateful recollections of the past, the peaceful joys of the present, and the blessed assurance of a glorious future. The heart overflowing with gladness, and surrounded with mercies, the worn and weary pilgrim leaves the valley and enters his Father's house — the home of never-ending love. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Thus winds up what has been often called — the children's psalm.

In like manner, we may say, concludes the Eighty-fourth. Amidst the light and glory, the strength and beauty, and the unmeasured goodness of God, the scene closes. And thus, O my soul, observe it well, ends every believer's earthly days. Death is no longer the master, but the servant of the believer — a messenger of peace. All may not know the truth alike, or enjoy it alike, but it is alike true to all. Our unbelief changes not the faithfulness of God, He changeth not, blessed be His name. The Lord God Himself is the pilgrim's sun and shield. As He said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15) What had Abram to fear? we may ask; what could Abram lack, when behind such a shield, and enjoying such a reward? Meditate, again, I pray thee, O my soul, on these wondrous words. They are directly applicable to thyself. Thou art, in virtue of thy union with Christ in heaven, a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth.

But the great truth for the heart is, not merely the thought of having "a sun and shield" as our light and protection in this world, but rather, who the sun and shield is. Not, observe, what, but who, the sun and shield is. The Lord God is thy sun and shield ■ Blessed truth! It meets the whole need of the heart. There is no sunshine like the beams of His countenance, and no shelter like the shadow of His wing. Treasure in thy heart this blessed truth — meditate thereon — make it thine own. And still dwell upon it, until it has become a part of thyself. Bask, as it were, in the sunshine, and repose behind the shield of thy God and Father. All must be peace, and rest, and light, and joy, and security there. No harm can ever come to thee there. It is thy Father's shield. It is well to be always in the shade as to this world, but ever in the sunshine of thy Father's face. While here below amidst all the weakness and darkness of this present scene, forget not that the Lord thy God is thy sun and shield — thy light and guidance in darkness — thy strength and protection in weakness. Thus shalt thou be effectually delivered from all doubts and fears, and filled with the full assurance of faith.

Experimentally, may I ask, my dear christian leader, dost thou feel thy heart expand, and willingly open out all its folds to the gracious light of this genial sun? It invites thy fullest confidence. It will warm and enlighten, but not consume. Suffer not a dark corner to remain concealed from its searching, yet cheering beams. It is fitted and intended to make thee perfectly happy. If one dark spot could remain on thy soul in heaven, it would be no heaven to thee.

But not one moment of thy history shall be left in the dark when thou art manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. There, every moment, and all that belongs to each moment, shall be revealed in the pure light of heaven. Then, thy happiness shall be complete — thy blessedness un-mingled —thy song of praise on the highest key-note of heaven. All will then be fully out between the Lord and thyself. And all that has been contrary to Him in thy ways shall perish from thy remembrance and from His; and all that has been done for Him shall be graciously acknowledged and rewarded. Even a cup of cold water given to one of the least of His disciples in His name shall be remembered and rewarded forever. No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. To walk uprightly, is to walk before Him, by Him, and or Him. It is only the believer's ways that are examined and estimated before the tribunal of Christ. The believer himself can never come into judgment, Christ having been judged for him. (John 5:24.) The Lord enable us now to walk in the light as He is in the light, that now we may be made manifest unto Him. 2 Cor. 5:10-21.

But there are other two words in the verse before us which must be noticed ere we part with our rich and instructive psalm. And words they are of no mean significance — “Grace and Glory.” All blessing, both for time and eternity, is folded up in these two words. “The Lord will give grace and glory.” Both come from Him, and both are the fruit, or expression, of His love. Some have spoken of grace as the bud, and glory as the full-blown beauties of the flower. Others have said, that in David and Solomon we have the illustration of both. Grace was exhibited in David, and glory in Solomon. It was grace that raised David from his low state to the highest honors; and it was the same grace that restored him when he wandered — that comforted him when in sorrow — that sustained him when in conflict, and that kept him safe until he reached his journey's end.

But when grace had done its work in David, glory shines forth in Solomon. Glory was stamped on everything under his reign. His throne, his attendants, every detail of his household, even the whole land of Israel reflected his glory (see 2 Chron. 9:1,12), yet grace shone in all the glory. The two things are inseparable. All the glories of the rose are folded up in the bud. But it is chiefly in this world that grace has to do with us. This marks the great difference between grace and glory.

Grace has to do with us in our weakness, failure, sorrow; and willingly brings the needed strength, restoration, comfort, and joy. It is the sweet and needed companion of the days of our humiliation. Oh! what a friend, what a companion, what a portion, grace is for a soul in this world; and what an unspeakable blessing to know the grace of God in truth! “The Lord will give grace and glory.” Forget not this, O my soul, reckon on both; on grace now, on glory hereafter. They can never fail. There is no need they cannot meet, and no enemy they cannot conquer. Like the pilgrim's guardian angels, “Goodness and Mercy,” in the twenty-third psalm, they surround thee on every side. Encircled indeed thou art, whether in Baca's vale, or on Zion's hill, with a heavenly company. In parting with the companion of many a happy hour, carry this thought with thee. It may give strength and courage to thy heart in a time of need. What can be more suitable for a pilgrim's path,

than the precious truths which are at once suggested by the beautiful symbols of a “sun and shield?” or by the plain but all comprehensive words — “Grace and glory?” And, as if these did not sufficiently express the love and care of thy Lord, it is added, “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”

Say, then, O say, my soul, is not this enough? He is unwearied in His love, He is all patience in His ministry, He waits on thee in every step of thy journey. He fills the pools and wells of Baca, to refresh the pilgrim on his way. What truth, oh! what truth for the heart — what light for the path — what strength for conflict — what assurance of victory, in His boundless grace!

Suffering first, glory follows. Take courage, my soul. “A little while,” and glory will fill the wide, wide regions of thy Lord’s dominions. And being with Him, thou shalt be at the center of it all. Conflict ceases there. Here, grace has to struggle with our evil in many ways, and sometimes it may seem doubtful which is to win the day; but the Lord gives more grace, and it always triumphs. But there, no evil can ever be, either to dispute or divide the scene with glory. Then, the days of evil will be past, and past forever. Then, the Lord of glory will have everything His own way — He will form and fashion everything after His own mind — He will keep everything under His own hand, and stamp everything with His own glorious image. It will be glory, glory, GLORY.

Oh! blessed, happy, looked for, longed for day, come quickly! Oh! what a day that will be — a day of, yet unknown, but of unmingled blessedness — a day of inconceivable joy in rejoining those who have gone before — in seeing thee, O most blessed Lord, face to face, and those, once known — well known and loved on earth! Oh! day of days, second to none, save that first of all days, when thou didst give thyself for us — when thou didst lay the foundation in thy death of that day of coming glory.

“Loved ones are gone before, whose pilgrim days are done;

I soon shall greet them on that shore, where partings are unknown.

But more than all, I long His glories to behold,

Whose smile shall fill the radiant throng with ecstasy untold.

That bright, yet tender smile — my sweetest welcome there —

Shall cheer me through the “little while” I tarry for Him here.”

And now, with mingled feelings, waiting and longing for that better day, I close my meditations on our beautiful Psalm. May the Lord bless it to every reader as He has done to the writer, and more if it be His good will. And may the testimony of the psalmist, in the closing note of his sacred song, be the assurance of our hearts and the testimony of our lives henceforward and forever. “O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.”

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes

The tents where thou dost dwell!

For thine abode my spirit faints and sighs;

The courts I love so well.

My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.
The sparrow, Lord, hath found a shelter'd home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.
I, to thine altars flying,
Would there forever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!
How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.
A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.
From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;
Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilize the land,
And wayside grace is given,
Till they in Zion stand.
Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!

O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our Shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!
Look thou upon the glory
Of thine Anointed's face;
In Him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!
One day with thee excelleth o'er and o'er
A thousand days apart;
In thine abode, within thy temple-door,
Would stand my watchful heart.
Men tell me of the treasure
Hid in their tents of sin
I look not there for pleasure,
Nor choose to enter in.
Own thou the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
No good will He withhold;
He giveth grace, and soon shall be reveal'd
His glory, yet untold.
His mighty name confessing,
Walk thou at peace and free;
O Lord, how rich the blessing
Of him who trusts in thee!
German Choral Altisio.

Faith and Humility

(Luke 7:1-17.)

Here we have the case of the Centurion, and a very full and striking one it is. It is not merely an act of grace, but grace to a Gentile. Nor is this all. The principle on which the apostle rests this question is brought out. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed." Faith, as the great turning point, is introduced. It was no mere theory: it was living faith, and such faith as had not been seen in Israel. Neither was there presumption, but on the contrary, remarkable humility. He recognized the honor God had put upon His people; he sees, holds to it, owns and acts upon it, spite of their low and debased, and, in every other respect, unworthy condition. Despised and failing as they might be, he loved the Jews as God's people, and for His sake, and he had built them their synagogue. Unfeigned lowliness was his, though (yea, rather, for) his faith was far beyond those he honored. Consequently, he had a very high apprehension of the power and glory of the person of Christ as divine, reaching out beyond Jewish thoughts altogether. He does not refer to the Lord as Messiah, but recognized in Him the power of God in love. This was blessed faith which forgets itself in the exaltation of its object. He saw not Jesus, it would seem, but assuredly gathered from what "he heard," that diseases were nothing to Him but occasions wherein to display His absolute authority and His sovereign mercy. He was a stranger, and the Jews were God's people; must not they or their elders be the fittest to bring this wonderful person? For he confided in His mercy as well as His power, and his servant, "dear unto him," was sick and ready to die. He needed Jesus.

"Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." There was, surely, the deepest personal respect and affection. Untaught as he might be in other things, he strongly felt the excellency of Christ's person, and here again with humility correspondent to the measure in which His glory was seen. This message of the centurion's friends admirably depicts his character and feeling. He told nothing to Jesus of his service to the Jews, spoke of nothing personal save his unworthiness, and this so consistently, that he begged Jesus not to come to his house, as unworthy to receive Him. There was in this soul the exact opposite of doing Christ an honor, by believing on Him, and far from him was the pretense of receiving Christ to set himself up: both, alas! found often elsewhere. The simplicity of his heart is as apparent as his strong faith. There was none such in Israel, and yet it was in one who loved Israel. It was a lesson of grace, in every way, for the crowd that followed Jesus — for us, too, most surely.

Along with grace to the Gentiles came the evidence of power to raise the dead, but here it was manifested in human sympathies, in witness that God had visited His people. (Ver. 11-17.) It was the power of resurrection, a power which was yet to be shown more gloriously and to be the source of that which is new for man according to God — the God who raiseth the dead. It was

another and wondrous proof that He is here going, in the character of His action, without the sphere of the law and its ordinances. "For the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth." What can it avail for one who is dead? "But 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," &c. It was grace, indeed, and divine energy, but withal displayed in One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And how astonishingly all the details bring this out! The dead man was "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." "And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.....And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother." How exquisitely human, and withal how unmistakably divine!

Forever With the Lord

“At home with Jesus! He who went before,
For His own people mansions to prepare;
The soul’s deep longings stilled, its conflicts o’er,
All rest and blessedness with Jesus there —
What home like this can the wide earth afford?
So shall we be forever with the Lord.
With Him all gathered! to that blessed home,
Through all its windings still the pathway tends;
While ever and anon bright glimpses come
Of that fair city where the journey ends.
Where all of bliss is centered in one word,
‘So shall we be forever with the Lord.’
Here kindred hearts are severed far and wide,
By many a weary mile of land and sea,
Or life’s all-varied cares, and paths divide
But yet a joyful gathering shall be,
The broken links repaired, the lost restored,
‘So shall we be forever with the Lord.’”

Forgiven and Forgotten

“Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. 10) It is a common saying amongst men, “I can forgive, but I cannot forget.” The tide of human affection may rise, at times, to such a height as to cover the tablet on which memory has engraved the record of my misdeeds; but when the tide retires, the record is there. Not so the love of God, that mighty floodtide not only covers the tablet, but obliterates the inscription forever, so that not a trace of it remains. “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Precious words! God can not only forgive but forget.

“The trembling sinner feareth

That God can ne'er forget;

But one full payment cleareth

His memory of all debt.

When naught beside could ease as

Or set our souls at large,

Thy holy work, Lord Jesus,

Secured a full discharge.”

Here is true rest for the exercised conscience. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1) The eye of infinite holiness cannot discern a single stain of guilt upon the conscience that has been once purged by the precious blood of Christ. All the sins and iniquities of the believer are plunged in the waters of eternal oblivion. God has pledged Himself never to remember them. He can say, “I have not beheld iniquity in Jacob.” Man cannot undertake to forget. He cannot prevent memory from throwing up, at times, upon its surface, the record of the past; but God can. The atoning work of Jesus has forever canceled the believer’s guilt, so that it can never again rise against him.

Reader, hast thou been led by God’s Spirit, and by the action of the word, to see thy guilt in the light of the divine presence? Hast thou been brought to own thyself utterly lost? If so, thou canst, at this moment, enter into all the tranquillizing power of those most blessed words, “Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more.” Jesus paid thy debt — paid it on the cross — paid it in blood. Believe this, on the authority of God, and thy soul shall have the sweetest peace. If God assures thee that He will no more remember thy sins and iniquities, then verily peace — divine and eternal peace is thy settled portion — peace founded on the blood of Christ and the imperishable record of God.

Fragment

“I confess, to my shame,” writes the godly Richard Baxter, “that I remember no one sin that my conscience doth so much accuse and judge me for, as for doing so little for the salvation of men’s souls, and dealing no more earnestly and fervently with them for their conversion. I confess, that when I am alone, and think of the case of poor, ignorant, worldly, unconverted sinners, that live not to God, nor set their hearts on the life to come, my conscience telleth me that I should go to as many of them as I can, and tell them plainly what will become of them, if they do not turn to the Lord. And though I have many excuses, yet none of them do satisfy my own conscience, when I consider what heaven and hell are, which will one of them be the end of every man’s life. My conscience tells me that I should follow them night and day, with all earnestness, and take no denial till they return to God.”

Hark Ten Thousand Voices Crying: the Original Form of the Hymn

O the joy of the salvation
We possess around the throne,
Countless thoughts of admiration
Mingling leave that joy but one.
Hark! ten thousand voices crying,
"Lamb of God!" with one accord;
Thousand thousand saints replying,
Bursts at once the echoing chord.
Long with free and glad devotion
Universal praise prevails,
Till, blest fruit of deep emotion,
Voice by voice in silence fails.
Now, in wondrous adoration,
Dwelling on His matchless love,
Sway'd with power of that salvation,
Silence fills the courts above.
Then their richest thoughts unfolding,
Each to each with joy divine,
Heavenly converse blissful holding,
Tells how bright His glories shine.
Some on God's high glories dwelling,
Brightly beaming in His face;
Some His First-born greatness telling,
Ordering all things in their place.
These of Godhead's counsels deep
Him th' Accomplisher proclaim;

These how Jesu's self could weep,
Of Godhead's love the Witness came.
All on love surpassing rest,
That clothed in flesh the great I AM:
Till from a heart divinely parts
Bursts forth at length the loud exclaim,
"Praise the Lamb!" — at once awaking
The gather'd hosts, their voices throng;
Loud and wide each tongue partaking,
Roils renew'd the endless song.
Grateful incense this ascending,
Rises to the Father's throne;
Every knee to Christ is bending,
All the mind in heaven is one.
All the Father's counsels claiming
Equal honors to the Son,
All the Son's effulgence bearing,
Glory of His Father's throne.
By the Spirit all pervading
Radiant hosts unnumber'd round,
Breathing glory never fading,
Echo back the blissful sound.
Joyful now the wide creation
Rests in undisturbed repose;
Blest in Jesus' full salvation,
Sorrow now nor thralldom knows.
Rich the streams of bounty flowing,
Common blessings from above,
Life and holy joy bestowing,

Tell of God's unwearied love.

Hark, the heavenly notes again!

Loudly swells the air-borne praise;

Throughout creation's vault, Amen,

"Amen!" responsive joy doth raise.

J. N. D.

The Jewel Reset

Can the jewel e'er regret
Her rock-bound prison home, when set
In gold and brilliants richly met?
Such our love's jewel! rich and bright
In Heaven's fair setting; in His light,
Who fashion'd it for His own sight.
The tie He wove from nature's loom
Hath link'd us in that training room
Where links are forged that mock the tomb.
Yes! links of gold without alloy,
Which time nor death can e'er destroy
From Him, our life, our common joy
What music in that holy sphere,
Like that which had its key-note here;
Which mid earth's din, beats soft and clear?
And such was ours — Such will it be,
Eternal music! For 'tis He
Whose master-hand hath set the key.
From "The Widow's Mite."

Josiah and His Times: Part 1

(2 Chron. 34; 35)

Two thousand four hundred years have rolled away since King Josiah? lived and reigned; but his history is pregnant with instruction, which can never lose its freshness or its power. The moment at which he ascended the throne of his fathers was one of peculiar gloom and heaviness. The tide of corruption, swollen by many a tributary stream, had risen to the highest point; and the sword of judgment, long held back in divine patience and longsuffering, was about to fall, in terrible severity, upon the city of David. The brilliant reign of Hezekiah had been followed by a long and dreary period of fifty-five years, under the sway of his son Manasseh; and, albeit the rod of correction had proved effectual in leading this great sinner to repentance and amendment, yet no sooner had the scepter fallen from his hand, than it was seized by his godless and impenitent son Amon, who “ did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as did Manasseh his father; for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them, and humbled not himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more. And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.....And the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.” (2 Chron. 33:22-25.)

Thus, then, Josiah, a child of eight years, found himself on the throne of David, surrounded by the accumulated evils and errors of his father and his grandfather, yea by forms of corruption which had been introduced by no less a personage than Solomon himself. If the reader will just turn, for a moment, to 2 Kings 23, he will find a marvelous picture of the condition of things at the opening of Josiah’s history. There were “idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to him incense in the high places, in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; those also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.”

Reader, ponder this! Only think of kings of Judah, successors of David, ordaining priests to burn incense to Baal. Bear in mind, too, that each of those kings of Judah was responsible to “write him a copy of the book of the law,” which he was to keep by him, and in which he was to “read all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and those statutes to do them.” (See Deut. 17:18, 19.) Alas! alas! how sadly had they departed from “all the words of the law,” when they could actually set about ordaining priests to burn incense to false gods!

But, further, there were “horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun” and that, moreover, “at the entering in of the house of the Lord,” and “chariots of the sun” and “high places which Solomon, the king of Israel, had budded for Ashtoreth, the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom, the abomination of the children of Ammon.”

All this is most solemn, and worthy of the serious consideration of the christian reader. We certainly ought not to pass it over as a mere fragment of ancient history. It is not as though we were reading the historic records of Babylon, of Persia, of Greece, or of Borne. We should not marvel at the kings of those nations burning incense to Baal, ordaining idolatrous priests, and worshipping the host of heaven. But when we see kings of Judah, the sons and successors of David, children of Abraham, men who had access to the book of the law of God, and who were responsible to make that book the subject of their profound and constant study; when we see such men falling under the power of dark and debasing superstition, it sounds in our ears a warning voice, to which we cannot, with impunity, refuse to give heed. We should bear in mind that all these things have been written for our learning; and although it may be said that we are not in danger of being led to burn incense to Baal, or to worship the host of heaven, yet, we may be assured, we have need to attend to the admonitions and warnings with which the Holy Ghost has furnished us in the history of God's ancient people. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have met." (1 Cor. 10:11.) These words of the inspired apostle, though directly referring to the actings of Israel, in the wilderness, may, nevertheless, apply to the entire history of that people - a history fraught with the deepest instruction from first to last.

But how are we to account for all those gross and terrible evils into which Solomon and his successors were drawn? What was their origin? **NEGLECT OF THE WORD OF GOD.** This was the source of all the mischief and all the sorrow. Let professing Christians remember this. Let the whole Church of God remember it. The neglect of the Holy Scriptures was the fruitful source of all those errors and corruptions which blot the page of Israel's history, and which brought down upon them many heavy strokes of Jehovah's governmental rod. "Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalm 17:4.) "From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect (■πτιος), thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:15-17.)

In these two precious quotations, we have the word of God presented in its twofold virtue; it not only perfectly preserves us from all evil, but perfectly furnishes us unto all good — it keeps us from the paths of the destroyer, and guides us in the ways of God.

How important then is the study, the diligent, earnest, prayerful study of holy scripture! How needful to cultivate a spirit of reverential submission, in all things, to the authority of the word of God! Mark how continually and how earnestly this was impressed upon the ancient people of God. How often were such accents as the following sounded in their ears! "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.....Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is pour wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely, this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day. Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." (Deut. 4:1-9.)

Let it be carefully noticed, here, that "wisdom and understanding" consist simply in having the commandments of God treasured in the heart. This, moreover, was to be the basis of Israel's moral greatness, in view of the nations around them. It was not the learning of the schools of Egypt, or of the Chaldeans. No; it was the knowledge of the word of God, and attention thereto — the spirit of implicit obedience, in all things, to the holy statutes and judgments of the Lord their God. This was Israel's wisdom, this their true and real greatness, this their impregnable bulwark against every foe — their moral safeguard against every evil.

And does not the selfsame thing hold good with respect to God's people, at the present moment? Is not obedience to the word of God our wisdom, our safeguard, and the foundation of all true moral greatness? Assuredly! Our wisdom is to obey. The obedient soul is wise, safe, happy, and fruitful. As it was, so it is. If we study the history of David and his successors, we shall find, without so much as a single exception, that those who yielded obedience to the commandments of God were safe, happy, prosperous, and influential. And so it will ever be. Obedience will always yield its own precious and fragrant fruits, not that its fruits should be our motive for rendering obedience; we are called to be obedient, irrespective of everything.

Now, it is obvious, that, in order to be obedient to the word of God, we must be acquainted with it, and in order to be acquainted with it, we must carefully study it. And how should we study it? With an earnest desire to understand its contents, with profound reverence for its authority and with an honest purpose to obey its dictates, cost what it may. If we have grace to study scripture, in some small degree after this fashion, we may expect to grow in knowledge and wisdom.

But alas! there is a fearful amount of ignorance of scripture, in the professing Church. We are deeply impressed with a sense of this; and we may as well, at this point, just tell the reader that our main object in calling his attention to the subject of "Josiah and his times" is to wake up in his soul an intense desire after a closer acquaintance with God's holy word, and a more entire bowing down of his whole moral being — heart, conscience, and understanding, to that perfect standard.

We feel the commanding importance of this subject, and we must discharge what we believe to be a sacred duty to the souls of our readers, and to the truth of God. The powers of darkness are abroad. The enemy is succeeding, to an appalling extent, in drawing hearts after various forms of error and evil, in casting dust in the eyes of God's people, and in blinding the minds of men. True we have not got Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom; but we have Ritualism, Infidelity, and Spiritualism. We have not to cry out against burning incense to Baal and worshipping the host of heaven; but we have something far more ensnaring and dangerous. We have the ritualist with his sensuous and attractive rites and ceremonies. We have the rationalist with his learned and plausible reasonings; we have the spiritualist with his boasted converse with the spirits of the departed.

We speak plainly, and deal faithfully with living facts around us. We must do so, even at the risk of giving offense to some. We certainly do not wish to offend anyone; but we must be true to our

responsibility. We hold that one grand object of ministry, whether oral or written, is to bring the word of God to bear upon hearts and consciences, with direct reference to the principles and influences abroad, at the moment. No doubt, there are certain great cardinal truths — truths lying at the foundation of Christianity, the unfolding and application of which must always be in place, always important. But, at the same time, we believe that the public teacher or writer is called upon, at times, to deal with certain forms of error and evil actually at work, and to bring the edge of truth to bear thereon. This surely may be done in such a way as not to wound, needlessly, the feelings of individuals. But even though some should feel hurt, we can only say, it is far better to be wounded by a friend than destroyed by an enemy; and however it may be, we cannot withhold a word of solemn warning, when we contemplate the rising tide of evil — a tide augmented, every hour, by the influx of these three broad and rapid streams of Ritualism, Rationalism, and Spiritualism.

We doubt if the minds of Christians generally are alive to the real character and extent of these formidable influences. There are, at this moment, millions of souls, throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church who are building their hopes for eternity upon the sandy foundation of ordinances, rites, and ceremonies. There is a most powerful revival of the superstitions of the middle ages; a return to the tradition of the Fathers, as they are called; a thirsting after antiquity; an intense longing after those things which gratify the senses, music, painting, architecture, vestments, lights, incense, all the appliances, in short, of a gorgeous and sensuous religion. The theology, the worship, and the discipline of the various churches of the Reformation are found insufficient to meet the religious cravings of the soul. They are too severely simple to satisfy hearts that long for something tangible on which to lean for support and comfort — something to feed the senses, and fan the flame of devotion.

Hence the strong tendency of the religious mind in the direction of what is called Ritualism. If the soul has not got hold of the truth, if there is not the living link with Christ, if the supreme authority of holy scripture be not put up in the heart, there is no safeguard against the powerful and fascinating influence of ceremonial religiousness. The most potent efforts of mere intellectualism, eloquence, logic, all the varied charms of literature, are found to be utterly insufficient to hold that class of minds to which we are now referring. They must have the forms and offices of religion; to these they will flock; round these they will gather; on these they will build.

It is painfully interesting to mark the efforts put forth, in various quarters, to act upon the masses and keep the people together. It is very evident to the thoughtful Christian that those who put forth such efforts must be sadly deficient in that profound faith in the power of the word of God, and of the cross of Christ which swayed the heart of the apostle Paul. They cannot be fully aware of the solemn fact that Satan's grand object is to keep souls in ignorance of divine revelation, to hide from them the glory of the cross, and of the Person of Christ. For this end he is using Ritualism, Rationalism, and Spiritualism, now, just as he used Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom, in the days of Josiah. "There is nothing new under the sun." The devil has ever hated the truth of God, and he will leave no stone unturned to keep it from acting on the heart of man. Hence it is that he has rites and ceremonies for one man; the powers of reason for another; and when men tire of both, and begin to sigh for something satisfying, he leads them into converse and communion with the spirits of the departed. By all alike are souls led away from the holy scriptures, and from the blessed Savior which those scriptures reveal.

It is solemn and affecting, beyond expression, to think of all this, and not less so to contemplate the lethargy and indifference of those who profess to have the truth. We do not stop to inquire what it is that ministers to this lethargic state of many professors. That is not our object. We desire, by the grace of God, to see them thoroughly roused out of it, and to this end it is that we call their attention to the influences that are abroad, and to the only divine safeguard against them. We cannot but feel deeply for our children growing up in such an atmosphere as that which at present surrounds us, and which will become yet darker and darker. We long to see more earnestness, on the part of Christians, in seeking to store the minds of the young with the precious and soul-saving knowledge of the word of God. The child Josiah and the child Timothy should incite us to greater diligence in the instruction of the young, whether in the bosom of the family, in the Sunday School, or in any way we can reach them. It will not do for us to fold our arms, and say, O when God's time comes, our children will be converted; and, till then our efforts are useless." This is a fatal mistake. "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11) He blesses our prayerful efforts in the instruction of our children. And further, who can estimate the blessing of being early led in the right way, of having the character formed amid holy influences, and the mind stored with what is true, and pure, and lovely? On the other hand, who will undertake to set forth the evil consequences of allowing our children to grow up in ignorance of divine things? Who can portray the evils of a polluted imagination, of a mind stored with vanity, folly, and falsehood, of a heart familiarized, from infancy, with scenes of moral degradation? We do not hesitate to say that Christians incur very heavy and awful responsibility in allowing the enemy to pre-occupy the minds of their children at the very period when they are most plastic and susceptible.

True, there must be the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. It is as true of the children of Christians as of any other, that "they must be born again." We all understand this. But does this fact touch the question of our responsibility in reference to our children? Is it to cripple our energies or hinder our earnest efforts? Assuredly not. We are called upon, by every argument, divine and human, to shield our precious little ones from every evil influence, and to train them in that which is holy and good. And not only should we so act in respect to our own children, but also in respect to the thousands around us who are like sheep having no shepherd, and who may each say, alas! with too much truth, "No man cared for my soul."

May the foregoing pages be used by God's Spirit to act powerfully on the hearts of all who may read them, that so there may be a real awakening to a sense of our high and holy responsibilities to the souls around, and a shaking off of that terrible deadness and coldness over which we have all to mourn.

We have done little more than to introduce our subject which we hope, with the divine blessing, to pursue in our next.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Josiah and His Times: Part 2

In studying the history of Josiah and his times, we learn one special and priceless lesson, namely, the value and authority of the word of God. It would be utterly impossible for human language to set forth the vast importance of such a lesson — a lesson for every age, for every clime, for every condition, for the individual believer, and for the whole Church of God. The supreme authority of holy scripture should be deeply impressed on every heart. It is the only safeguard against the many forms of error and evil which abound on every hand. Human writings, no doubt, have their value; they may interest the mind as a reference; but they are perfectly worthless as authority.

We need to remember this. There is a strong tendency in the human mind to lean upon human authority. Hence it has come to pass, that millions throughout the professing Church have virtually been deprived altogether of the word of God, from the fact that they have lived and died under the delusion that they could not know it to be the word of God apart from human authority. Now this is, in reality, throwing the word of God overboard. If that word is of no avail without man's authority, then, we maintain, it is not God's word at all. It does not matter, in the smallest degree, what the authority is, the effect is the same. God's word is declared to be insufficient without something of man to give the certainty that it is God that is speaking.

This is a most dangerous error, and its root lies far deeper in the heart than many of us are aware. It has often been said to us, when quoting passages of scripture, "How do you know that that is the word of God?" What is the point of such a question? Plainly to overthrow the authority of the word. The heart that could suggest such an inquiry does not want to be governed by holy scripture at all. The will is concerned. Here lies the deep secret. There is the consciousness that the word condemns something which the heart wants to hold and cherish and hence the effort to set the word aside altogether.

But how are we to know that the book which we call the Bible is the word of God? We reply, it carries its own credentials with it. It bears its own evidence upon every page, in every paragraph, in every line. True, it is only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the divine Author of the Book, that the evidence can be weighed, and the credentials appreciated. But we do not want man's voice to accredit God's Book; or, if we do, we are, most assuredly, on infidel ground, as regards divine revelation. If God cannot speak directly to the heart — if He cannot give the assurance that it is He Himself who speaks, then where are we? Whither shall we turn? If God cannot make Himself heard and understood, can man do it better? Can he improve upon God? Can man's voice give us more certainty? Can the authority of the Church, the decrees of general councils, the judgment of the fathers, the opinion of the doctors, give us more certainty than God Himself? If so, we are just as completely at sea — just as thoroughly in the dark, as though God had not spoken at all. Of course, if God has not spoken, we are completely in the dark; but if He has spoken, and yet we cannot know His voice without man's authority to accredit it, where lies the difference? Is it not plain to the reader of these lines that if God, in His great mercy, has given us a revelation, it must be sufficient of itself; and, on the other hand, that any revelation which is not sufficient of itself

cannot possibly be divine? And, further, is it not equally plain that if we cannot believe what God says, because He says it, we have no safer ground to go upon when man presumes to affix his accrediting seal?

Let us not be misunderstood. What we insist upon is this, the all-sufficiency of a divine revelation apart from and above all human writings, ancient, mediaeval, or modern. We value human writings; we value sound criticism; we value profound and accurate scholarship; we value the light of true science and philosophy; we value the testimony of pious travelers who have sought to throw light upon the sacred text; we value all those books that open up to us the intensely interesting subject of biblical antiquities; in short, we value everything that tends to aid us in the study of the Holy Scriptures; but, after all, we return with deeper emphasis to our assertion, as to the all-sufficiency and supremacy of the word of God. That word must be received on its own divine authority, without any human recommendation, or else it is not the word of God to us. We believe that God can give us the certainty, in our own souls, that the Holy Scriptures are, in very deed, His own word. If He does not give it, no man can; and if He does, no man need. Thus the inspired apostle says to his son Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Tim. 3:14, 15.

How did Timothy know that the Holy Scriptures were the word of God? He knew it by divine teaching. He knew of whom he had learned. Here lay the secret. There was a living link between his soul and God, and he recognized in scripture the very voice of God. Thus it must ever be. It will not do merely to be convinced in the intellect, by human arguments, human evidences, and human apologies, that the Bible is the word of God; we must know its power in the heart and on the conscience by divine teaching; and, when this is the case, we shall no more need human proofs of the divinity of the Book than we need a rushlight, at noonday, to prove that the sun is shining. We shall then believe what God says because He says it, and not because man accredits it, nor because we feel it. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." He did not want to go to the Chaldeans or to the Egyptians in order to find out from them, if what he had heard was, in reality, the word of God. No, no; he knew whom he had believed, and this gave him holy stability. He could say, beyond all question, "God has established a link between my soul and Himself by means of His word, which no power of earth or hell can ever snap." This is the true ground for every believer, man, woman, or child, in all ages, and under all circumstances. This was the ground for Abraham and Josiah, for Luke and Theophilus, for Paul and Timothy; and it must be the ground for the writer and the reader of these words, else we shall never be able to stand against the rising tide of infidelity which is sweeping away the very foundations on which thousands of professors are reposing.

However, we may well inquire, can a merely national profession, a hereditary faith, an educational creed, sustain the soul in the presence of an audacious skepticism that reasons about everything and believes nothing? Impossible! We must be able to stand before the skeptic, the rationalist, and the infidel, and say, in all the calmness and dignity of a divinely-wrought faith, "I know whom I have believed." Then we shall be little moved by such books as "The Phases of Faith," "Essays and Reviews," "Broken Lights," "Ecce Homo," or "Colenso." They will be no more to us than gnats in the sunshine. They cannot hide from our souls the heavenly beams of our Father's Revelation.

God has spoken, and His voice reaches the heart. It makes itself heard above the din and confusion of this world, and all the strife and controversy of professing Christians. It gives rest and peace, strength and fixedness to the believing heart and mind. The opinions of men may perplex and confound. We may not be able to thread our way through the labyrinths of human systems of theology; but God's voice speaks in holy scripture — speaks to the heart — speaks to me. This is life and peace. It is all I want. Human writings may now go for what they are worth, seeing I have all I want in the ever-flowing fountain of inspiration — the peerless, precious volume of my God.

But let us now turn to Josiah, and see how all that we have been dwelling upon finds its illustration in his life and times.

“Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign.” (2 Chron. 34:1.) This tells a tale, as to the condition and ways of God's people. Josiah's father had been murdered by his own servants, after a brief and evil reign of two years, in the twenty-fourth year of his age. Such things ought not to have been. They were the sad fruit of sin and folly — the humiliating proofs of Judah's departure from Jehovah. But God was above all; and although we should not have expected ever to find a child of eight years of age on the throne of David, yet that child could find his sure resource in the God of his fathers, so that, in this case, as in all others, “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” The very fact of Josiah's youth and inexperience only afforded an occasion for the display of divine grace, and the setting forth of the value and power of the word of God.

This pious child was placed in a position of peculiar difficulty and temptation. He was surrounded by errors in various forms, and of long standing; but “he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left. For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.”

This was a good beginning. It is a great matter, while the heart is yet tender, to have it impressed with the fear of the Lord. It preserves it from a host of evils and errors. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and it taught this pious youth to know what was “right” and to adhere to it with unswerving fixedness of purpose. There is great force and value in the expression, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” It was not that which was right in his own eyes, nor yet in the eyes of the people, nor in the eyes of those that had gone before him; but simply what was right in the sight of the Lord. This is the solid foundation of all right action. Until the fear of the Lord gets its true place in the heart, there can be nothing right, nothing wise, nothing holy. How can there be, if indeed that fear is the beginning of wisdom? We may do many things through the fear of man, many things through force of habit, through surrounding influence; but never can we do what is really right in the sight of the Lord, until our hearts are brought to understand the fear of His holy Name. This is the grand regulating principle. It imparts seriousness, earnestness, and reality — rare and admirable qualities! It is an effectual safe-guard against levity and vanity. A man or a child who habitually walks in the fear of God is always earnest and sincere, always free from trifling and affectation, from assumption and bombast. Life has a purpose, the heart has an object, and this gives intensity to the whole course and character.

But, further, we read of Josiah that “He walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.” What a testimony for the Holy Ghost to bear concerning a

young man! How we do long for this plain decision! It is invaluable, at all times, but especially in a day of laxity and latitudinarianism, of false liberality, and spurious charity, like the present. It imparts great peace of mind. A vacillating man is never peaceful; he is always tossed to and fro. "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." He tries to please everybody, and, in the end, pleases nobody. The decided man, on the contrary, is he who feels he has "to please but one." This gives unity and fixedness to the life and character. It is an immense relief to be thoroughly done with men-pleasing and eye-service — to be able to fix the eye upon the Master alone, and go on with Him, through evil report and through good report. True, we may be misunderstood and misrepresented; but that is a very small matter indeed; our great business is to walk in the divinely-appointed path, "declining neither to the right hand, nor to the left." We are convinced that plain decision is the only thing for the servant of Christ, at the present moment, for so surely as the devil finds us wavering, he will bring every engine into play in order to drive us completely off the plain and narrow path. May God's Spirit work more mightily in our souls, and give us increased ability to say, "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise."

We shall now proceed to consider the great work which Josiah was raised up to accomplish; but, ere doing so, we must ask the reader to notice, particularly, the words already referred to, namely, "In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father." Here, we may rest assured, lay the true basis of all Josiah's valuable service. He began by seeking after God. Let young Christians ponder this deeply. Hundreds, we fear, have made shipwreck by rushing prematurely, into work. They have become occupied and engrossed with their service before the heart was rightly established in the fear and love of God. This is a very serious error indeed, and we have met numbers, within the last few years, who have fallen into it. We should ever remember that those whom God uses much in public, He trains in secret, and, further, that all his most honored servants have been more occupied with their Master than with their work. It is not that we undervalue work; by no means; but we do find that all those who have been signally owned of God, and who have pursued a long and steady course of service and christian testimony, have begun with much deep and earnest heart-work, in the secret of the divine presence. And, on the other hand, we have noticed, that when men have rushed prematurely into public work — when they began to teach before they had begun to learn, they have speedily broken down and gone back.

It is well to remember this. God's plants are deeply rooted, and often slow of growth. Josiah "began to seek God," four years before he began his public work. There was, in his case, a firm groundwork of genuine personal piety, on which to erect the superstructure of active service. This was most needful. He had a great work to do. "High places and groves, carved images and molten images," abounded on all hands, and called for no ordinary faithfulness and decision. Where were these to be had? In the divine treasury, and there alone. Josiah was but a child, and many of those who had introduced the false worship were men of years and experience. But he set himself to seek the Lord. He found his resource in the God of his father David. He betook himself to the fountain head of all wisdom and power, and there gathered up strength wherewith to gird himself for what lay before him.

This, we repeat, was most needful; it was absolutely indispensable. The accumulated rubbish of ages and generations lay before him. One after another of his predecessors had added to the pile; and, notwithstanding the reformation effected in the days of Hezekiah, it would seem as though all

had to be done over again. Hearken to the following appalling catalog of evils and errors. “In the twelfth year, Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence: and the images that were on high above them he cut down: and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that bad sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so did he in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks round about. And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.”

See also the narrative given in 2 Kings 23, where we have a much more detailed list of the abominations with which this devoted servant of God had to grapple. We do not quote any further. Enough has been given to show the fearful lengths to which even the people of God may go when once they turn aside, in the smallest measure, from the authority of holy scripture. We feel that this is one special lesson to be learned from the deeply interesting history of this best of Judah’s kings, and we fondly trust it may be learned effectually. It is indeed a grand and all-important lesson. The moment a man departs the breadth of a hair, from scripture, there is no accounting for the monstrous extravagances into which he may rush. We may feel disposed to marvel how such a man as Solomon could ever be led to “build high-places for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon.” But then we can easily see how that, having, in the first place, disobeyed the word of his Lord, in going to those nations for wives, he easily enough fell into the deeper error of adopting their worship.

But, christian reader, let us remember that all the mischief, all the corruption and confusion, all the shame and dishonor, all the reproach and blasphemy had its origin in the neglect of the word of God. We cannot possibly ponder this fact too deeply. It is solemn, impressive, and admonitory beyond expression. It has ever been a special design of Satan to lead God’s people away from scripture. He will use anything and everything for this end — tradition — the Church, so-called — expediency — human reason — popular opinion — reputation and influence — character, position, and usefulness — all these he will use in order to get the heart and conscience away from that one golden sentence — that divine, eternal motto, “It is written.” All that enormous pile of error which our devoted young monarch was enabled to “grind into dust, and beat into powder” — all, all had its origin in the gross neglect of this most precious sentence. It mattered little to Josiah that all these things could boast of antiquity, and the authority of the fathers of the Jewish nation. Neither was he moved by the thought that these altars and high places, these groves and images might be regarded as proofs of largeness of heart, breadth of mind, and a liberality of spirit that spurned all narrowness, bigotry, and intolerance — that would not be confined within the narrow bounds of Jewish prejudice, but could travel forth through the wide, wide world, and embrace all in the circle of charity and brotherhood. None of these things, we are persuaded, moved him. If they were not based upon “Thus saith the Lord,” he had but one thing to do with them, and that was to “beat them into powder.”

(To be continued, if the Lord will,)

Josiah and His Times: Part 3

THE various periods in the life of Josiah are very strongly marked. "In the eighth year of his reign, he began to seek after the God of David his father." "In the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem." And, "in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God."

Now, in all this, we can mark that progress which ever results from a real purpose of heart to serve the Lord. "The path of the just is as a shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Such was the path of Josiah; and such, too, may be the path of the reader, if only he is influenced by the same earnest purpose. It does not matter what the circumstances may be. We may be surrounded by the most hostile influences, as Josiah was, in his day; but a devoted heart, an earnest spirit, a fixed purpose will, through grace, lift us above all, and enable us to press forward, from stage to stage of the path of true discipleship.

If we study the first twelve chapters of the Book of Jeremiah, we shall be able to form some idea of the condition of things in the days of Josiah. There we meet with such passages as the following, "I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them." "Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit." So also, in the opening of chapter 3 we find the most terrible imagery used to set forth the base conduct of "backsliding Israel and treacherous Judah." Harken to the following glowing language in chapter 4. "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart. My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For my people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger."

What vivid language! The whole scene seems, in the vision of the prophet, reduced to primeval chaos and darkness. In short, nothing could be more gloomy than the aspect here presented. The

whole of these opening chapters should be carefully studied, if we would form a correct judgment of the times in which Josiah's lot was cast. They were evidently times characterized by deep-seated and wide-spread corruption, in every shape and form. High and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, prophets, priests, and people - all presented an appalling picture of hollowness, deceit, and heartless wickedness which could only be faithfully portrayed by an inspired pen.

But why dwell upon this? Why multiply quotations in proof of the low moral condition of Israel and Judah in the days of king Josiah? Mainly to show that, no matter what may be our surroundings, we can individually serve the Lord, if only there be the purpose of heart to do so. Indeed, it is in the very darkest times that the light of true devotedness shines forth most brightly. It is thrown into relief by the surrounding gloom. The very circumstances which indolence and unfaithfulness would use as a plea for yielding to the current, will only furnish a devoted spirit with a plea for making head against it. If Josiah had looked around him, what would he have seen? Treachery, deceit, corruption, and violence. Such was the state of public morals. And what of religion? Errors and evils in every imaginable shape. Some of these were hoary with age. They had been instituted by Solomon and left standing by Hezekiah. Their foundations had been laid amid the splendors of the reign of Israel's wisest and wealthiest monarch; and the most pious and devoted of Josiah's predecessors had left them as they found them.

Who then was Josiah that he should presume to overturn such venerable institutions? What right had he, a mere youth, raw and inexperienced, to set himself in opposition to men so far beyond him in wisdom, intelligence, and mature judgment? Why not leave things as he found them? Why not allow the current to flow peacefully on through those channels which had conducted it for ages and generations? Disruptions are hazardous. There is always great risk in disturbing old prejudices.

These and a thousand kindred questions might, doubtless, have exercised the heart of Josiah; but the answer was simple, direct, clear and conclusive. It was not the judgment of Josiah against the judgment of his predecessors; but it was the judgment of God against all. This is a most weighty principle for every child of God, and every servant of Christ. Without it, we can never make head against the tide of evil which is flowing around us. It was this principle which sustained Luther in the terrible conflict which he had to wage with the whole of Christendom. He, too, like Josiah, had to lay the ax to the root of old prejudices, and shake the very foundation of opinions and doctrines which had held almost universal sway in the Church for over a thousand years. How was this to be done? Was it by setting up the judgment of Martin Luther against the judgment of popes and cardinals, counsels and colleges, bishops and doctors? Assuredly not. This would never have brought about the Reformation. It was not Luther versus Christendom; but Holy Scripture versus error.

Reader, ponder this! Yes, ponder it deeply. We feel it is a grand and all-important lesson for this moment, as it surely was for the days of Luther, and for the days of Josiah. We long to see the supremacy of Holy Scripture — the paramount authority of the word of God — the absolute sovereignty of Divine Revelation reverently owned throughout the length and breadth of the Church of God. We are convinced that the enemy is diligently seeking, in all quarters and by all means, to undermine the authority of the word, and to weaken its hold upon the human

conscience. And it is because we feel this that we seek to raise, again and again, a note of solemn warning, as also to set forth, according to our ability, the vital importance of submitting, in all things, to the inspired testimony — the voice of God in scripture. It is not sufficient to render a merely formal assent to that popular statement, “The Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants.” We want more than this. We want to be, in all things, absolutely governed by the authority of scripture — not by our fellow mortal’s interpretation of scripture, but by scripture itself. We want to have the conscience in a condition to yield, at all times, a true response to the teachings of the divine word.

This is what we have so vividly illustrated in the life and times of Josiah, and particularly in the transactions of the eighteenth year of his reign, to which we shall now call the reader’s attention. This year was one of the most memorable, not only in the history of Josiah, but in the annals of Israel. It was signalized by two great facts, namely, the discovery of the book of the law, and the celebration of the feast of the passover. Stupendous facts! Facts which have left their impress upon this most interesting period, and rendered it pre-eminently fruitful in instruction to the people of God in all ages.

It is worthy of note that the discovery of the book of the law was made during the progress of Josiah’s reformatory measures. It affords one of the ten thousand proofs of that great practical principle, that “to him that hath shall more be given.” And, again, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

“Now, in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God. And when they came to Hilkiah the priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God.....And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the Lord given by Moses. And Hilkiah the priest answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king.....And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.” 2 Chron. 34:8-19.

Here we have a tender conscience bowing under the action of the word of God. This was one special charm in the character of Josiah. He was, in truth, a man of an humble and a contrite spirit, who trembled at the word of God. Would that we all knew more of this! It is a most valuable feature of the christian character. We certainly do need to feel, much more deeply, the weight, authority, and seriousness of scripture. Josiah had no question whatever in his mind as to the genuineness and authenticity of the words which Shaphan had read in his hearing. We do not read of his asking, “How am I to know that this is the word of God?” No; he trembled at it. He bowed before it. He was smitten down under it. He rent his garments. He did not presume to sit in judgment upon the word of God, but, as was meet and right, he allowed that word to judge him.

Thus it should ever be. If man is to judge scripture, then scripture is not the word of God at all. But if scripture is, in very truth, the word of God, then it must judge man. And so it is, and so it does. Scripture is the word of God and it judges man thoroughly. It lays bare the very roots of his nature — it opens up the foundations of his moral being. It holds up before him the only faithful mirror in which he can see himself perfectly reflected. This is the reason why man does not like scripture —

cannot bear it — seeks to set it aside — delights to pick holes in it — dares to sit in judgment upon it. It is not so in reference to other books. Men do not trouble themselves so much to discover and point out flaws and discrepancies in Homer or Herodotus, Aristotle or Shakespeare. No; but scripture judges them — judges their ways — their lusts. Hence the enmity of the natural mind to that most precious and marvelous Book, which, as we have already remarked, carries its own credentials with it to every divinely prepared heart. There is a power in scripture which must bear down all before it. All must bow down under it, sooner or later. “The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Heb. 4:12, 13.

Josiah found it to be even so. The word of God pierced him through and through. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel, and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.” What a striking contrast between Josiah, with contrite heart, exercised conscience, and rent garments, bowing down under the mighty action of the word of God, and our modern skeptics and infidels who, with appalling audacity, dare to sit in judgment upon that very same word! Oh! that men would be wise in time, and bow their hearts and consciences, in reverent submission, to the word of the living God, before that great and terrible day of the Lord, in the which they shall be compelled to bow, amid “weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!”

God's word shall stand forever, and it is utterly vain for man to set himself up in opposition to it, or seek by his reasonings and skeptical speculations to find out errors and contradictions in it. “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven.” “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” “The word of the Lord endureth forever.” Of what possible use is it, therefore, for man to resist the word of God? He can gain nothing; but oh I what may he lose? If man could prove the Bible false, what should he gain? But if it be true, after all, what does he lose? A serious inquiry! May it have its weight with any reader whose mind is at all under the influence of rationalistic or infidel notions!

We shall now proceed with our history.

“And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college) and they spake to her to that effect.” At the opening of this paper we referred to the fact of a child of eight years old being on the throne of David, as indicative of the condition of things amongst the people of God. Here, too, we are arrested by the fact that the prophetic office is filled by a woman. It surely tells a tale. Things were low; but the grace of God was unfailing and abundant; and Josiah was so thoroughly broken down that he was prepared to receive the communication of the mind of God through whatever channel it might reach him. This was morally lovely. It might, to nature's view, seem very humiliating for a king of Judah to have

recourse to a woman for counsel. But then that woman was the depository of the mind of God, and this was quite enough for an humble and a contrite spirit, like Josiah. He had, thus far, proved that his one grand desire was to know and do the will of God, and hence it mattered not by what vehicle the voice of God was conveyed to his ear, he was prepared to hear and obey.

Christian reader, let us consider this. We may rest assured that herein lies the true secret of divine guidance. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way." (Psalm 25:9.) Were there more of this blessed spirit of meekness amongst us, there would be less confusion, less controversy, less striving about words to no profit. If we were all meek, we should all be divinely guided and divinely taught, and thus we should see eye to eye; we should be of one mind, and speak the same thing, and avoid much sad and humbling division and heart-burning.

See what a full answer the meek and contrite Josiah received from Huldah the prophetess — an answer both as to his people and as to himself. "And she answered them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their bands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched."

All this was but the solemn reiteration and establishment of what had already fallen upon the open and attentive ear of the king of Judah; but then it came with fresh force, emphasis, and interest, as a direct personal communication to himself. It came enforced and enhanced by that earnest sentence, "Tell ye the man that sent you to me."

But there was more than this. There was a gracious message directly concerning Josiah himself. "And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, concerning the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again." 2 Chron. 34:23-28

All this is full of instruction and encouragement for us, in this dark and evil day. It teaches us the immense value, in the divine estimation, of deep personal exercise of soul, and contrition of heart. Josiah might have deemed the case hopeless — that nothing could avert the mighty tide of wrath and judgment which was about to roll over the city of Jerusalem, and the land of Israel — that any movement of his must prove utterly unavailing — that the divine purpose was settled — the decree gone forth, and that, in short, he had only to stand by and let things take their course. But Josiah did not reason thus. No; he bowed before the divine testimony. He humbled himself, rent his clothes, and wept. God took knowledge of this. Josiah's penitential tears were precious to Jehovah, and though the appalling judgment had to take its course, yet the penitent escaped. And not only did he himself escape, but he became the honored instrument, in the Lord's hand, of delivering others also. He did not abandon himself to the influence of a pernicious fatalism, but in brokenness of spirit and earnestness of heart, he cast himself upon God, confessing his own sins

and the sins of his people. And then, when assured of his own personal deliverance, he set himself to seek the deliverance of his brethren also, this is a fine moral lesson for the heart. May we learn it thoroughly!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Josiah and His Times: Part 4

It is deeply interesting and instructive to mark the actings of Josiah, when his heart and conscience had been brought under the powerful influence of the word of God. He not only bowed down under that word himself; but he sought to lead others to bow likewise. This must ever be the case, where the work is real. It is impossible for a man to feel the weight and solemnity of truth, and not seek to bring others under its action. No doubt, a quantity of truth may be held in the intellect — held superficially — held in a merely speculative, notional way; but this will have no practical effect; it does not tell upon the heart and conscience, after a diving living fashion; it does not affect the life and character. And, inasmuch as it does not affect our own souls, neither will our mode of presenting it, be very likely to act with much power upon others. True, God is sovereign, and He may use His own word, even when spoken by one who has never really felt its influence; but we are speaking now of what may properly and naturally be looked for; and we may rest assured that the best way in which to make others feel deeply is to feel deeply ourselves.

Take any truth you please. Take, for example, the glorious truth of the Lord's coming. How is a man most likely to affect his hearers by the presentation of this truth? Unquestionably, by being deeply affected himself. If the heart be under the power of that solemn word, "The Lord is at hand" — if this fact be realized in all its solemnity as to the world, and in its sweet attractiveness, as to the believer individually, and the Church collectively, then it will, assuredly, be presented in a way calculated to move the hearts of the hearers. It is easy to see when a man feels what he is saying. There may be a very clear and clever exposition of the doctrine of the second advent, and of all the collateral truths; but if it be cold and heartless, it will fall powerless on the ears of the audience. In order to speak to hearts, on any subject, the heart of the speaker must feel. What was it that gave such power to Whitfield's discourses? It was not the depth or the range of truth contained in them, as is manifest to any intelligent reader. No; the secret of their mighty efficacy lay in the fact that the speaker felt what he was saying. Whitfield wept over the people, and no marvel if the people wept under Whitfield. He must be a hardened wretch indeed who can sit unmoved under a preacher who is shedding tears for his soul's salvation.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not mean to say that anything in a preacher's manner can, of itself, convert a soul. Tears cannot quicken. Earnestness cannot regenerate. It is "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is only by the powerful action of the word and Spirit of God that any soul can be born again. All this we fully believe, and would ever bear in mind. But, at the same time, we as fully believe and would also bear in mind, that God blesses earnest preaching, and souls are moved by it. We have far too much mechanical preaching — too much routine work — too much of what may justly be called going through a service. We want more earnestness, more depth of feeling, more intensity, more power to weep over the souls of men, a more influential and abiding sense of the awful doom of impenitent sinners, the value of an immortal soul, and the solemn realities of the eternal world. We are told that the famous Garrick was once asked, by a bishop, how it was that he produced far more powerful results by his fiction, than the bishops could by preaching truth. The reply of the actor is full of force. "My Lord," said he,

“the reason is obvious I speak fiction as though it were truth, whereas you speak truth as though it were fiction.”

Alas! it is much to be feared that too many of us speak truth in the same way, and hence the little result. We are persuaded that earnest, faithful preaching is one of the special wants of this our day. There are a few, here and there, thank God, who seem to feel what they are at — who stand before their audience as those who consider themselves as channels of communication between God and their fellows — men who are really bent on their work — bent, not merely on preaching and teaching, but on saving and blessing souls. The grand business of the evangelist is to bring the soul and Christ together; the business of the teacher and pastor is to keep them together. True, it is, most blessedly true, that God is glorified, and Jesus Christ magnified, by the unfolding of truth, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear; but is this fact to be allowed to interfere, in the smallest degree, with the ardent desire for results in reference to souls? We do not, for a moment, believe it. The preacher should look for results, and should not be satisfied without them. He should no more think of being satisfied to go on without results than the husbandman thinks of going on, from year to year, without a crop. Some preachers there are, who only succeed in preaching their hearers away, and then they content themselves by saying, “We are a sweet savor to God.” Now, we believe this is a great mistake, and a fatal delusion. What we want is to live before God for the results of our work — to wait upon Him — to agonize in prayer for souls — to throw all our energies into the work — to preach as though the whole thing depended upon us, although knowing full well that we can do just nothing, and that our words must prove as the morning cloud, if not fastened as a nail in a sure place, by the Master of assemblies. We are convinced that, in the divine order of things, the earnest workman must have the fruit of his labor; and that according to his faith, so shall it be. There may be exceptions; but, as a general rule, we may rest assured that a faithful preacher, working in his divinely-appointed sphere, will, sooner or later, reap fruit.

We have been drawn into the foregoing line of thought while contemplating the interesting scene in the life of Josiah, presented to us at the close of the thirty-fourth chapter of 2 Chronicles. It will be profitable for us to dwell upon it. Josiah was a man thoroughly in earnest. He felt the power of truth in his own soul, and he could not rest satisfied until he gathered the people around him, in order that the light which had shone upon him might shine upon them likewise. He did not — he could not, rest in the fact that he was to be gathered to his grave in peace, that his eyes were not to see the evil that was coming upon Jerusalem, that he was to escape the appalling tide of judgment which was about to roll over the land. No; he thought of others, he felt for the people around him; and, inasmuch as his own personal escape stood connected with, and based upon, his true penitence and humiliation under the mighty hand of God, so he would seek, by the action of that word which had wrought so powerfully in his own heart, to lead others to like penitence and humiliation.

“Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small; and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul, to

perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days, they departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.”

There is a fine moral lesson in all this for us — yea, many lessons to which we, with all our light, knowledge, and privilege, may well sit down. What, first of all, strikes us, at this moment, is the fact that Josiah felt his responsibility to those around him. He did not put his light under a bushel, but rather allowed it to shine for the full benefit and blessing of others. This is all the more striking inasmuch as that great practical truth of the unity of all believers in one body, was not known to Josiah, because not revealed by God. The doctrine contained in that one brief sentence, “There is one body and one Spirit,” was not made known until long after the times of Josiah, even when Christ the risen Head had taken His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

But, although this truth was “hid in God,” nevertheless there was the unity of the nation of Israel. There was a national unity though there was not the unity of a body; and this unity was always recognized by the faithful, whatever might be the outward condition of the people. The twelve loaves, on the table of show-bread, in the sanctuary, were the divine type of the perfect unity and yet the perfect distinctness of the twelve tribes. The reader can see this in Lev. 24. It is full of interest, and should be deeply pondered by every student of scripture, and every earnest lover of the ways of God. During the dark and silent watches of the night, the seven lamps of the golden candlestick threw their light upon the twelve loaves, ranged by the hand of the high priest, according to the commandment of God upon the pure table. Significant figure! In it we have foreshadowed, in the most vivid way, the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes — a truth which must never be lost sight of — a truth which God has revealed, established, and maintained, and which the faith of His people has ever recognized and acted upon.

It was on this grand truth that Elijah the Tishbite took his stand when, on Mount Carmel, he built an altar “with twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.” (1 Kings 18) To this same truth Hezekiah had regard when he commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. (2 Chron. 29:24.) Paul, in his day, referred to this precious truth when, in the presence of king Agrippa, he spoke of “our twelve tribes instantly serving God, day and night.” Acts 26:7.

Now if any one of those men of faith had been asked, “Where are the twelve tribes?” could he have given an answer? Could he have pointed them out? Assuredly, he could; but not to sight — not to man's view, for the nation was divided — its unity was broken. In the days of Elijah and Hezekiah there were the ten tribes and the two; and in the days of Paul, the ten tribes were scattered abroad, and only a remnant of the two in the land of Palestine, under the dominion of Daniel's fourth beast. What then? Was the truth of God made of none effect by Israel's outward condition? Far be the thought! “Our twelve tribes” must never be given up. The unity of the nation is a grand reality to faith. It is as true, at this moment, as when Joshua pitched the twelve stones at Gilgal. The word of our God shall stand forever. Not one jot or tittle of aught that He has spoken shall ever pass away. Change and decay may mark the history of human affairs; death and

desolation may sweep, like a withering blast, over earth's fairest scenes; but Jehovah will make good His every word, and Israel's twelve tribes shall yet enjoy the promised land, in all its length, breadth, and fullness. No power of earth or hell shall be able to binder this blessed consummation. And why? What makes us so sure? How can we speak with such absolute certainty? Simply because the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. We can be a great deal more sure that Israel's tribes shall yet enjoy their fair inheritance, in Palestine, than that the house of Tudor once held sway in England. The former we believe on the testimony of God who cannot lie; the latter, on the testimony of erring man.

It is of the utmost importance that the reader should be clear as to this, not only because of its special bearing upon Israel and the land of Canaan, but also because it affects the integrity of scripture, as a whole. There is a loose mode of handling the word of God, which is, at once, dishonoring to Him and injurious to us. Passages which apply distinctly and exclusively to Jerusalem and to Israel, are made to apply to the spread of the gospel and the extension of the christian Church. This, to say the least of it, is taking a very unwarrantable liberty with divine revelation. Our God can surely say what He means; and, as surely, He means what He says; hence, when He speaks of Israel and Jerusalem, He does not mean the Church; and when He speaks of the Church, He does not mean Israel or Jerusalem.

Expositors and students of scripture should ponder this. Let no one suppose that it is merely a question of prophetic interpretation. It is far more than this. It is a question of the integrity, value, and power of the word of God. If we allow ourselves to be loose and careless in reference to one class of scriptures, we are likely to be loose and careless as to another, and then our sense of the weight and authority of all scripture will be sadly enfeebled.

But we must return to Josiah and see how he recognized, according to his measure, the great principle on which we have been dwelling. He certainly proved no exception to the general rule, namely, that all the pious kings of Judah had regard to the unity of the nation of Israel, and never suffered their thoughts, their sympathies, or their operations, to be confined within any narrower range than "our twelve tribes." The twelve loaves on the pure table were ever before the eye of God, and ever before the eye of faith. Nor was this a mere speculation — a non-practical dogma — a dead letter. No; it was, in every case, a great practical, influential truth. "Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel" This was acting in the fullest harmony with his pious predecessor, Hezekiah, who "commanded that the burnt offering, and the sin offering should be made for all Israel."

And now, christian reader, mark the application of all this to our own souls, at this present moment. Do you heartily believe, upon divine authority, in the doctrine of the unity of the body of Christ? Do you believe that there is such a body, on this earth, now, united to its divine and living Head, in heaven, by the Holy Ghost? Do you hold this great truth from God Himself, upon the authority of holy scripture? Do you, in one word, hold as a cardinal and fundamental truth of the New Testament the indissoluble unity of the Church of God? Do not turn round and ask, "where is this to be seen?" This is the question which unbelief must ever put, as the eye rests upon Christendom's numberless sects and parties, and to which faith replies, as the eye rests upon that imperishable sentence, "There is one body and one Spirit." Mark the words! "There is" It does not say there was, at one time, and there shall be, again, "one body." Neither does it say that such a

thing exists in heaven. No; but it says, "There is one body and one Spirit," now, on this earth. Can this truth be touched by the condition of things in the professing church? Has God's word ceased to be true, because man has ceased to be faithful? Will any one undertake to say that the unity of the body was only a truth for apostolic times, and that it has no application now, seeing that there is no exhibition of it?

Reader, we solemnly warn you to beware how you admit into your heart a sentiment so entirely infidel as this. Rest assured it is the fruit of positive unbelief in God's word. No doubt, appearances argue against this truth; but what truth is it against which appearances do not argue? And say, is it on appearances that faith ever builds? Did Elijah build on appearances, when he erected his altar of twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob? Did king Hezekiah build on appearances, when he issued that fine commandment, that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel? Did Josiah build on appearances, when he carried his reformatory operations into all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel? Surely not. They built upon the faithful word of the God of Israel. That word was true whether Israel's tribes were scattered or united. If God's truth is to be affected by outward appearances or by the actings of men, then where are we? or what are we to believe? The fact is, there is hardly a truth in the entire compass of divine revelation to which we could with calm confidence commit our souls, if we suffer ourselves to be affected by outward appearances.

No, reader; the only ground on which we can believe anything is this one eternal clause, "It is written!" Do you not admit this? Does not your whole soul bow down to it? Do you not hold it to be a principle entirely vital? We believe you do, as a Christian, hold, admit, and reverently believe this. Well then, it is written, "There is one body and one Spirit." (Eph. 4) This is as clearly revealed in scripture as that "we are justified by faith," or any other truth. Do outward appearances affect the saving fundamental doctrine of justification by faith? Are we to call in question this precious truth because there is so little exhibition of its purifying power in the lives of believers? Who could admit such a fatal principle as this? What a complete upturning of all the foundations of our faith is necessarily involved in the admission of this most mischievous line of reasoning! We believe, because it is written in the word, not because it is exhibited in the world. Doubtless, it ought to be exhibited, and it is our sin and shame that it is not. To this we shall afterward refer more fully; but we must insist upon the proper ground of belief, namely, divine revelation; and when this is clearly seen and fully admitted, it applies as distinctly to the doctrine of the unity of the body, as it does to the doctrine of justification by faith.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Josiah and His Times: Part 5

We feel it to be of real moment to insist upon the principle laid down in the closing paragraph of our paper for September, namely, that the only ground on which we can believe any doctrine is its being revealed in the Divine Word. It is thus we believe all the great truths of Christianity. We know nothing and can believe nothing of what is spiritual, heavenly, or divine, save as we find it revealed in the word of God. How do I know I am a sinner? Because scripture hath declared that "All have sinned." No doubt, I feel that I am a sinner; but I do not believe because I feel, but I feel because I believe, and I believe because God has spoken. Faith rests upon divine revelation, not on human feelings, or human reasonings. "It is written," is quite sufficient for faith. It can do with nothing less; but it asks nothing more. God speaks, faith believes. Yes, it believes simply because God speaks. It does not judge God's word by outward appearances, but it judges outward appearances by the word of God.

Thus it is in reference to all the cardinal truths of the christian religion. Such as the Trinity; the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His atonement; His priesthood; His advent; the doctrine of original sin; of justification; judgment to come; eternal punishment. We believe these grand and solemn truths, not on the ground of feeling, of reason, or of outward appearances, but simply on the ground of divine revelation.

Hence, then, if it be asked, 'On what ground do we believe in the doctrine of the unity of the body?' we reply, Upon the selfsame ground that we believe the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, and the atonement. We believe it because it is revealed in sundry places in the New Testament. Thus, for example, in the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, we read. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is 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." Again, "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism in the body.....Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Here we have distinctly laid down the perfect and indissoluble unity of the Church of God, the Body of Christ, on precisely the same authority as any other truth commonly received amongst us, so that there is just as much ground for calling in question the Deity of Christ as there is for calling in question the unity of the body. The one is as true as the other; and both are divinely true because divinely revealed. We believe that Jesus Christ is God over all, blessed forever, because scripture tells us so; we believe that there is one body because scripture tells us so. We do not reason in the one case, but believe and bow; nor should we reason in the other case, but believe and bow. "There is one body and one Spirit."

Now, we must bear in mind that this truth of the unity of the body is not a mere abstraction — a barren speculation — a powerless dogma. It is a practical, formative, influential truth, in the light of which we are called to walk, to judge ourselves, and all around us. It was so with the faithful in

Israel of old. The unity of the nation was a real thing to them, and not a mere theory to be taken up or laid down at pleasure. It was a great formative, powerful truth. The nation was one in God's thoughts; and if it was not manifestly so, the faithful had only to take the place of self-judgment, brokenness of spirit, and contrition of heart. Witness the case of Hezekiah, Josiah, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Ezra. It never once occurred to these faithful men that they were to give up the truth of Israel's unity because Israel had failed to maintain it. They did not measure the truth of God by the actings of men; but they judged the actings of men, and themselves likewise, by the truth of God. This was the only true way to act. If the manifested unity of Israel was marred through man's sin and folly, the true-hearted members of the congregation owned and mourned over the sin, confessed it as their own, and looked to God. Nor was this all. They felt their responsibility to act on the truth of God whatever might be the outward condition of things.

This, we repeat, was the meaning of Elijah's altar of twelve stones, erected in the face of Jezebel's eight hundred false prophets, and despite the division of the nation in man's view. (1 Kings 18) This, too, was the meaning of Hezekiah's letters sent to "all Israel" to invite them to "come to the house of the Lord, at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord God of Israel." Nothing can be more touching than the spirit and style of these letters: "Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria. And be not ye like your fathers and like your brethren, which trespassed against the Lord God of their fathers, who, therefore, gave them up to desolation, as ye see. Now, be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the Lord, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified forever; and serve the Lord your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you. For if ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you." 2 Chron. 30:6-9.

What was all this but simple faith acting on the grand, eternal, immutable truth of the unity of the nation of Israel? The nation was one in the purpose of God, and Hezekiah looked at it from the divine standpoint, as faith ever does, and he acted accordingly. "So the posts passed from city to city, through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn and mocked them." This was very sad; but it is only what we must expect. The actings of faith are sure to call forth the scorn and contempt of those who are not up to the standard of God's thoughts. Doubtless, these men of Ephraim and Manasseh regarded Hezekiah's message as a piece of presumption, or wild extravagance. Perhaps the great truth that was acting with such power on his soul, forming his character, and ruling his conduct, was, in their judgment, a myth, or, at best, a valueless theory — a thing of the past — an institution of bygone ages, having no present application. But faith is never moved by the thoughts of men, and therefore Hezekiah went on with his work, and God owned and blessed him. He could afford to be laughed at and turned into ridicule, while he beheld divers of Asher and Manasseh and Zebulun humbling themselves and coming to Jerusalem." Hezekiah and all who thus humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God reaped a rich harvest of blessing, while the mockers and scorners were left in the barrenness and deadness with which their own unbelief had surrounded them.

And let the reader mark the force of those words of Hezekiah, "If ye turn again unto the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive." Does not

this approach very near to that precious truth of the New Testament times, that we are members one of another, and that the conduct of one member affects all the rest? Unbelief might raise the question as to how this could possibly be — as to how the actings of one could possibly affect others far away; yet it was in Israel, and so it is now in the Church of God. Witness the case of Achan, in the seventh chapter of Joshua. There, one man sinned; and, so far as the narrative informs us, the whole congregation was ignorant of the fact, and yet we read that “the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing.” And again, “Israel hath sinned.” How could this be? Simply because the nation was one, and God dwelt among them. This, plainly, was the ground of a double responsibility, namely, a responsibility to God, and a responsibility to the whole assembly, and to each member in particular. It was utterly impossible for any one member of the congregation to shake off this high and holy responsibility. A person living at Daniel might feel disposed to question how his conduct could affect a man living at Beer-sheba; yet such was the fact, and the ground of this fact lay in the eternal truth of Israel’s indissoluble unity, and Jehovah’s dwelling in the midst of His redeemed assembly. (See Exod. 15:2, and the many passages which speak of God’s dwelling in the midst of Israel.)

We do not attempt even to quote the numerous scriptures which speak of God’s presence in the congregation of Israel — His dwelling in their midst. But we would call the attention of the reader to the all-important fact that those scriptures begin with Exod. 15 It was when Israel stood as a fully redeemed people, on Canaan’s side of the Red Sea, that they were able to say, “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation.” Redemption formed the ground of God’s dwelling among His people, and His presence in their midst secured their perfect unity. Hence no one member of the congregation could view himself as an isolated independent atom. Each one was called to view himself as part of a whole, and to view his conduct in reference to all those who, like himself, formed part of that whole.

Now, reason could never grasp a truth like this. It lay entirely beyond the ken of the most powerful human intellect. Faith alone could receive it and act upon it; and it is of the deepest interest to see that the faithful in Israel ever recognized it, and acted upon it. Why did Hezekiah send letters to “all Israel?” Why did he expose himself to scorn and ridicule in so doing? Why did he command that “the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel?” Why did Josiah carry his reformatory operations into “all the counties that pertained to the children of Israel?” Because those men of God recognized the divine truth of Israel’s unity; and they did not think of throwing this grand reality overboard because so few saw it, or sought to carry it out. “The people shall dwell alone;” and “I, the Lord, will dwell among the children of Israel.” These imperishable truths shine, like most precious gems of heavenly luster, all along the page of Old Testament scripture; and we invariably find that, just in proportion as any one was living near to God — near to the living and ever-gushing fountain of light, and life, and love - just in proportion as he entered into the thoughts, purposes, sympathies, and counsels of the God of Israel, did he apprehend and seek to carry out that which God had declared to be true of His people, though His people had proved so untrue to Him.

And now, christian reader, we would ask you a very plain and pointed question, which is this, Do you not recognize, in the unity of the Jewish nation, the foreshadowing of a higher unity now existing in that one body of which Christ is the Head? We trust you do. We fondly hope that your

whole moral being bows down, with reverent submission, to the mighty truth, "There is one body." But then we can well imagine that you feel yourself not a little perplexed and confounded, when you cast your eye around you, through the length and breadth of the professing church, in search of any positive expression of this unity. You see Christians scattered and divided — you see innumerable sects and parties, and, what, perhaps, puzzles you most of all, you see those who profess to believe and act upon the truth of the unity of the body, divided amongst themselves, and presenting anything but a spectacle of unity and harmony. All this, we confess, is very perplexing to one who looks at it from a merely human standpoint. We are not the least surprised at people being stumbled and hindered by these things. Still the foundation of God standeth sure. His truth is perfectly indestructible; and if we gaze with admiration upon the faithful worthies of a by-gone age who believed and confessed the unity of Israel, when there was not a trace of that unity visible to mortal eyes; why should we not heartily believe and diligently carry out the higher unity of the one body? "There is one body and one Spirit," and herein lies the basis of our responsibility to one another and to God. Are we to surrender this all-important truth because Christians are scattered and divided? God forbid. It is as real and as precious as ever, and it ought to be as formative and as influential. We are bound to act upon the truth of God, irrespective of consequences, and utterly regardless of outward appearances. It is not for us to say, as so many do, "The case is hopeless, everything is gone to pieces; it is impossible to carry out the truth of God amid the heaps of rubbish which lie around us; the unity of the body was a thing of the past, it may be a thing of the future, but it cannot be a thing of the present. The idea of unity must be abandoned as thoroughly Utopian, it cannot be maintained in the face of Christendom's numberless sects and parties. Nothing remains now but for each one to look to the Lord for himself, and do the best he can, in his own individual sphere, and according to the dictates of his own conscience and judgment."

Such, is, in substance, the language of hundreds of the true people of God; and, as is their language so is their practical career. But, we must speak plainly, and we have no hesitation in saying that this language savors of sheer unbelief in that great cardinal verity of the unity of the body; and, moreover, that we have just as much warrant for rejecting the precious doctrine of Christ's Deity, of His perfect Humanity, or of His vicarious sacrifice, as we have for rejecting the truth of the perfect unity of His body, inasmuch as this latter rests upon precisely the same foundation as the former, namely, the eternal truth of God — the absolute statement of holy scripture. What right have we to set aside any one truth of divine revelation? What authority have we to single out any special truth from the word of God, and say that it no longer applies? We are bound to receive all truth, and to submit our souls to its authority. It is a dangerous thing to admit for a moment the idea that any one truth of God is to be set aside, on the plea that it cannot be carried out. It is sufficient for us that it is revealed in the holy scriptures; we have only to believe and to obey. Does scripture declare that there is "one body?" Assuredly, it does. This is enough. We are responsible to maintain this truth, cost what it may. can accept nothing else, nothing less, nothing different. We are bound, by the allegiance which we owe to Christ the Head, to testify, practically, against everything that militates against the truth of the indissoluble unity of the Church of God, and to seek earnestly and constantly a faithful expression of that unity.

True, we shall have to contend with false unity on the one hand, and false individuality on the other; but we have only to hold fast and confess the truth of God, looking to Him, in humility of mind, and earnest purpose of heart, and He will sustain us in the path, let the difficulties be what

they may. No doubt there are difficulties in the way — grave difficulties, such as we in our own strength cannot cope with. The very fact that we are told to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace,” is sufficient to prove that there are difficulties in the way; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is amply sufficient for all the demands that may be made upon us in seeking to act upon this most precious truth.

In contemplating the present condition of the professing church, we may discern two very distinct classes. In the first place there are those who are seeking unity on false grounds. And, secondly, those who are seeking it on the ground laid down in the New Testament. This latter is, distinctly, a spiritual, living, divine unity, and stands out in vivid contrast with all the forms of unity which man has attempted, whether it be national, ecclesiastical, ceremonial, or doctrinal. The Church of God is not a nation, not an ecclesiastical or political system. It is a body united to its divine Head in heaven, by the presence of the Holy Ghost. This is what it was, and this is what it is. “There is one body and one Spirit.” This remains unalterably true. It holds good now just as much as when the inspired apostle penned the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians. Hence anything that tends to interfere with or mar this truth must be wrong, and we are bound to stand apart from it and testify against it. To seek to unite Christians on any other ground than the unity of the body, is manifestly opposed to the revealed mind of God. It may seem very attractive, very desirable, very reasonable, right, and expedient; but it is contrary to God, and this should be enough for us. God’s word speaks only of the unity of the body, and the unity of the Spirit. It recognizes no other unity; neither should we.

The Church of God is one, though consisting of many members. It is not local, or geographical; it is corporate. All the members have a double responsibility; they are responsible to the Head; and they are responsible to one another. It is utterly impossible to ignore this responsibility. Men may seek to shirk it; they may deny it; they may assert their individual rights, and act according to their own reason, judgment, or will; but they cannot get rid of the responsibility founded upon the fact of the one compact body. They have to do with the Head in heaven, and with the members on earth. They stand in this double relationship — they were incorporated there into by the Holy Ghost, and to deny it is to deny their very spiritual existence. It is founded in life, formed by the Spirit, and taught and maintained in the holy scriptures. There is no such thing as independency. Christians cannot view themselves as mere individuals — as isolated atoms. “We are members one of another.” This is as true as that “we are justified by faith.” No doubt there is a sense in which we are individual: we are individual in our repentance; individual in our faith; individual in our justification; individual in our walk with God and in our service to Christ; individual in our rewards for service, for each one shall get a while stone and a new name engraved thereon known only to himself. All this is quite true; but it in nowise touches the other grand practical truth of our union with the Head above, and with each and all of the members below.

And we would here call the reader’s attention to two very distinct lines of truth flowing out of two distinct titles of our blessed Lord, namely. Headship and Lordship. He is Head of His body the Church; and He is Lord of all, Lord of each. Now, when we think of Christ as Lord, we are reminded of our individual responsibility to Him, in the wide range of service to which He, in His sovereignty, has graciously called us. Our reference must be to Him in all things. All our actings, all our movements, all our arrangements, must be placed under the commanding influence of that weighty sentence, (often alas! lightly spoken and penned,) “If the Lord will.” And, moreover, no one

has any right to thrust himself in between the conscience of a servant and the commandment of his Lord. All this is divinely true and of the very highest importance. The Lordship of Christ is a truth the value of which cannot possibly be overestimated.

But we must bear in mind that Christ is Head as well as Lord, He is Head of a body, as well as Lord of individuals. These things must not be confounded. We are not to hold the truth of Christ's Lordship in such a way as to interfere with the truth of His Headship. If we merely think of Christ as Lord, and ourselves as individuals responsible to Him, then we shall ignore His Headship and lose sight of our responsibility to every member of that body of which He is Head. We must jealously watch against this. We cannot look at ourselves as isolated independent atoms; if we think of Christ as Head, then we must think of all His members, and this opens up a wide range of practical truth. We have holy duties to discharge to our fellow members, as well as to our Lord and Master; and we may rest assured that no one walking in communion with Christ can ever lose sight of the grand fact of his relationship to every member of His body. Such a one will ever remember that his walk and ways exert an influence upon Christians living at the other side of the globe. This is a wondrous mystery; but it is divinely true. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." (1 Cor. 12:26.) You cannot reduce the body of Christ to a matter of locality; the body is one, and we are called to maintain this, practically, in every possible way, and to bear a decided testimony against everything which tends to hinder the expression of the perfect unity of the body, whether it be false unity, or false individuality. The enemy is seeking to associate Christians on a false ground and gather them round a false center; or, if he cannot do this, he will send them adrift upon the wide and tumultuous ocean of a desultory individualism. We are thoroughly persuaded, before God, that the only safeguard against both these false and dangerous extremes is divinely wrought faith in the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body of Christ.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Josiah and His Times: Part 6

It may here be proper to inquire what is the suited attitude of the Christian in view of the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body. That it is a truth distinctly laid down in the New Testament, cannot possibly be questioned. If any reader of these pages be not fully established in the knowledge and hearty belief of this truth, let him prayerfully study 1 Cor. 12 and 14; Eph. 2 and 4; Col. 2 and 3. He will find the doctrine referred to in a practical way in, the opening of Rom. 12, though it is not the design of the Holy Ghost, in that magnificent epistle, to give us a full unfolding of the truth respecting the Church. What we have to look for there is rather the establishment of the soul's relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Christ. We might pass through the first eleven chapters of Romans, and not know that there is such a thing as the Church of God, the body of Christ; and when we reach the twelfth chapter, the doctrine of the one body is assumed, but not dwelt upon.

There is, then, "one body" actually existing on this earth, formed by the "one Spirit," and united to the Living Head in heaven. This truth cannot be gainsaid. Some may not see it; some may find it very hard to receive it, in view of the present condition of things; but, nevertheless, it remains a divinely established truth that "there is one body," and the question is, how are we individually affected by this truth? It is as impossible to shake off the responsibility involved therein as it is to set aside the truth itself. If there is a body of which we are members, then do we, in very truth, stand in a holy relationship to every member of that body on earth as well as to the Head in heaven; and this relationship, like every other, has its characteristic affections, privileges, and responsibilities.

And, be it remembered, we are not speaking, now, of the question of association with any special company of Christians, but of the whole body of Christ upon earth. No doubt, each company of Christians, wherever assembled, should be but the local expression of the whole body. It should be so gathered and so ordered, on the authority of the word, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, as that all Christ's members who are walking in truth and holiness might happily find their place there. If an assembly be not thus gathered and thus ordered, it is not on the ground of the unity of the body at all. If there be anything, no matter what, in order, discipline, doctrine, or practice, which would prove a barrier to the presence of any of Christ's members, whose faith and practice are according to the word of God, then is the unity of the body practically denied. We are solemnly responsible to own the truth of the unity of the body. We should so meet that all the members of Christ's body might, simply as such, sit down with us and exercise whatever gift the Head of the Church has bestowed upon them. The body is one. Its members are scattered over the whole earth. Distance is nothing: locality, nothing. It may be New Zealand, London, Paris, or Edinburgh; it matters not. A member of the body in one place, is a member of the body everywhere, for there is but "one body and one Spirit." It is the Spirit who forms the body, and links the members with the Head and with one another. Hence, a Christian coming from New Zealand to London ought to expect to find an assembly so gathered as to be a faithful expression of the unity of the body, to which he might attach himself; and, furthermore, any such Christian ought to find his place in. the

bosom of that assembly, provided always that there be nothing in doctrine or walk to forbid his hearty reception.

Such is the divine order, as laid down in 1 Cor. 12 and 14; Eph. 2 and 4; and assumed in Rom. 12. Indeed we cannot study the New Testament and not see this blessed truth. We find, in various cities and towns, saints gathered by the Holy Ghost in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; as, for example, at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colosse, and Thessalonica. These were not independent, isolated, fragmentary assemblies, but parts of the one body, so that a member of the church in one place was a member of the Church everywhere. Doubtless, each assembly, as guided by the one Spirit, and under the one Lord, acted in all local matters, such as receiving to communion, or putting away any wicked person from their midst, meeting the wants of their poor, and such like; but we may be quite assured that the act of the assembly at Corinth would be recognized by all other assemblies, so that if anyone was separated from communion there, he would, if known, be refused in all other places; otherwise it would be a plain denial of the unity of the body. We have no reason to suppose that the assembly at Corinth communicated or conferred with any other assembly previous to the putting away of "the wicked person" in chapter 5; but we are bound to believe that that act would be duly recognized and sanctioned by every assembly under the sun, and that any assembly knowingly receiving the excommunicated man would have cast a slur upon the assembly at Corinth, and practically denied the unity of the body.

This we believe to be the plain teaching of the New Testament scriptures — this the doctrine which any simple, true-hearted student of these scriptures would gather up. That the Church has failed to carry out this precious truth is, alas! alas! painfully true; and that we are all participators in this failure is equally true. The thought of this should humble us deeply before God. Not one can throw a stone at another, for we are all verily guilty in this matter. Let not the reader suppose, for a single moment, that our object, in these pages, is to set up anything like high ecclesiastical pretensions, or to afford countenance to hollow assumption, in the face of manifest sin and failure. God forbid! we say with our very heart of hearts. We believe that there is a most urgent call upon all God's people to humble themselves in the very dust on account of our sad departure from the truth so plainly laid down in the word of God.

Thus it was with the pious and devoted King Josiah, whose life and times have suggested this entire line of thought. He found the book of the law, and discovered in its sacred pages an order of things wholly different from what he saw around him. How did he act? Did he content himself by saying, "The case is hopeless; the nation is too far gone; ruin has set in, and it is utterly vain to think of aiming at the divine standard, we must only let things stand, and do the best we can?" Nay, reader, such was not Josiah's language or mode of action; but he humbled himself before God, and called upon others to do the same. And not only so, but he sought to carry out the truth of God. He aimed at the very loftiest standard, and the consequence was that, "From the days of Samuel the prophet, there was no passover like to Josiah's kept in Israel; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover."

Such was the result of faithful reference and adherence to the word of God, and thus it will ever be, for "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Look at the actings of the remnant that returned from Babylon in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. What did they do? They set up the altar of God, they built the temple, and repaired the walls of Jerusalem. In other words, they occupied

themselves with the true worship of the God of Israel, and with the grand center or gathering point of His people. This was right. It is what faith always does, regardless of circumstances. If the remnant had looked at circumstances, they could not have acted. They were a poor contemptible handful of people, under the dominion of the uncircumcised Gentile. They were surrounded by active enemies on all sides, who, instigated by the enemy of God, of His city, of His people, left nothing undone to hinder them in their blessed work. These enemies ridiculed them and said, "What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?" Nor was this all; not only had they to contend with powerful foes without, there was also internal weakness; for Judah said, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the wall." (Neh. 4.) All this was very depressing. It was very different from the brilliant and palmy days of Solomon. His burden-bearers were many and strong, and there was no rubbish covering the great stones and costly with which he built the house of God, nor any contemptuous foe to sneer at his work. And yet, for all that, there were features attaching to the work of Ezra and Nehemiah which are not to be found in the days of Solomon. Their very feebleness; the piles of rubbish which lay before them; the proud and insulting enemies which surrounded them — all these things conspired to add a peculiar halo of glory to their work. They built and prospered, and God was glorified, and He declared in their ears these cheering words, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (Hag. 2:9.)

It is of importance, in connection with the subject that has been engaging our attention, that the reader should carefully study the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Haggai and Zechariah. They are full of most blessed instruction, comfort, and encouragement in a day like the present. Many, now-a-days, it may be, are disposed to smile at the bare mention of such a subject as the unity of the body. But let them ask themselves, Is it the smile of calm confidence, or the sneer of unbelief? One thing is certain, the devil as cordially hates the doctrine of the unity of the body as he hates any other doctrine of Divine Revelation; and he will as assuredly seek to hinder any attempt to carry it out, as he sought to hinder the rebuilding of Jerusalem, in the days of Nehemiah. But let us not be discouraged. It is enough for us that we find in God's word the precious truth of the one body. Let us bring the light of this to bear upon the present condition of the professing Church and see what it will reveal to our eyes. It will, most assuredly, put us on our faces in the dust, before our God, because of our ways; but, at the same time, it will lift our hearts up to the contemplation of the divine standard. It will so enlighten and elevate our souls as to render us thoroughly dissatisfied with everything that does not present some expression, however feeble, of the unity of the body of Christ. It is wholly impossible that anyone can drink into his soul the truth of the one body, and rest satisfied with anything short of the practical recognition thereof. True, he must make up his mind to bear the brunt of the enemy's opposition. He will meet a Sanballat here, and a Rehum, there; but faith can say,

"Is God for me? I fear not, though all against me rise;

When I call on Christ my Saviour, the host of evil flies."

There is ample encouragement for our souls in the word of God. If we look at Josiah just before the captivity, what do we see? A man simply taking the word as his guide —judging himself and all

around by its light — rejecting all that was contrary to it, and seeking, with earnest purpose of heart, to carry out what lie found written there. And what was the result? The most blessed passover that had been celebrated since the days of Samuel.

Again, if we look at Daniel during the captivity, what do we see? A man, acting simply on the truth of God, and praying toward Jerusalem, though death stared him in the face as the consequence of his act. What was the result? A glorious testimony to the God of Israel, and the destruction of Daniel's enemies.

Finally, if we look at the remnant, after the captivity, what do we see? Men, in the face of appalling difficulties, rebuilding that city which was, and shall be, God's earthly center. And what was the result? The joyous celebration of the feast of tabernacles which had not been known since the days of Joshua the son of Nun.

Now, if we take any one of the above interesting cases, and inquire as to the effect of their looking at surrounding circumstances, what answer shall we get? Take Daniel, for instance. Why did he open his window toward Jerusalem? Why look toward a city in ruins? Why call attention to a spot which only bore testimony to Israel's sin and shame? Would it not be better to let the name of Jerusalem sink into oblivion? Ah! we can guess at Daniel's reply to all such inquiries. Men might smile at him, too, and deem him a visionary enthusiast. But he knew what he was doing. His heart was occupied with God's center, the city of David, the grand gathering point for Israel's twelve tribes. Was he to give up God's truth because of outward circumstances? Surely not. He could not consent to lower the standard even the breadth of a hair. He would weep, and pray, and fast, and chasten his soul before God, but never lower the standard. Was he going to give up God's thoughts about Zion because Israel had proved unfaithful? Not he. Daniel knew better than this. His eye was fixed on God's eternal truth, and hence, though he was in the dust because of his own sins and his people's, yet the divine banner floated above his head, in its unfading glory.

Just so, now, dear christian reader, we are called to fix the gaze of faith upon the imperishable truth of the one body, and not only to gaze upon it, but seek to carry it out in our feeble measure. This should be our one definite and constant aim. We should ever and only seek the expression of the unity of the body. We are not to ask "How can this be?" Faith never says, "How?" in the presence of divine revelation. It believes and acts. We are not to surrender the truth of God on the plea that we cannot carry it out. The truth is revealed, and we are called to bow to it. We are not called to form the unity of the body. Very many seem to think that this unity is a something which they themselves are to set up or form in some way or another. This is a mistake. The unity exists. It is the result of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the body, and we have to recognize it, and walk in the light of it. This will give great definiteness to our course. It is always immensely important to have a distinct object before the heart, and to work with direct reference thereto. Look at Paul, that most devoted of workmen. What was his aim? For what did he work? Hear the answer in his own words, I "now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake which is the Church: whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and

teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; where-unto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.” Col. 1:24-29.

Now, this was a great deal more than the mere conversion of souls, precious as that is most surely. Paul preached the gospel with a direct view to the body of Christ; and this is the pattern for all evangelists. We should not rest in the mere fact that souls are quickened; we should keep before our minds their incorporation, by the one Spirit, into the one body. This would effectually preserve us from sect-making — from preaching to swell the ranks of a party — from seeking to get persons to join this, that, or the other denomination. We should know nothing whatever but the one body, because we find nothing else in the New Testament. If this be lost sight of, the evangelist will not know what to do with souls when they are converted. A man may be used in the conversion of hundreds — a most precious work indeed — precious beyond all expression — and if he does not see the unity of the body, he must be at sea as to their further course. This is very serious, both as to himself and them, and also as to the testimony for Christ.

May God’s Spirit lead all Christians to see this great truth in all its bearings. We have but glanced at it, in connection with our theme; but it demands much serious attention at the present moment. It may be that some of our readers are disposed to find fault with what they may deem along digression from the subject of “Josiah and his times.” But, in truth, it should not be looked on as a digression, but as a line of truth flowing naturally out of that subject — a line, too, which cannot possibly be overestimated.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Josiah and His Times: Part 7

In closing this series of papers on “Josiah and his Times,” we shall in few words advert, first, to the fact of his celebration of the passover; and, secondly, to the solemn close of his history. Our sketch of this truly interesting period would, unquestionably, be incomplete were these things omitted.

And first, then, as to the fact — so full of interest and encouragement — that, at the very close of Israel’s history, there should be one of the brightest moments that Israel had ever known. What does this teach us? It, very manifestly, teaches us that, in darkest times, it is the privilege of the faithful soul to act on divine principle, and to enjoy divine privileges. “We look upon this as a most weighty fact for all ages, but specially weighty at the present moment. If we did nothing more, by writing our papers on Josiah, than to impress this great fact on the mind of the christian reader, we should consider that we had not written in vain. If Josiah had been influenced by the spirit and principle which, alas! seem to actuate so many in this our day, he never could have attempted to celebrate the passover at all. He would have folded his arms and said, “It is useless to think of maintaining, any longer, our great national institutions. It can only be regarded as a piece of presumption to attempt the celebration of that ordinance which was designed to set forth Israel’s deliverance from judgment by the blood of the lamb, when Israel’s unity is broken, and its national glory faded and gone.”

But Josiah did not reason like this. He simply acted upon the truth of God. He studied the scriptures, and rejected what was wrong and did what was right.

Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month.” (2 Chronicles 35:1.) This was taking higher ground than Hezekiah had taken, inasmuch as he kept his passover “on the fourteenth day of the second month.” (Chap. 30:15.) In so doing, Hezekiah was, as we know, availing himself of the provision which grace had made for cases of defilement. (See Numb. 9:9-11.) The divine order, however, had fixed “the first month” as the proper period, and to this order Josiah was enabled to conform. In short, he took the very highest ground, according to the truth of God, while lying low under the deep sense of personal and national failure. This is ever the way of faith.

“And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the Lord, and said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the Lord. Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, did build: it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders, serve now the Lord your God, and his people Israel. And prepare yourselves by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son; and stand in the holy place, according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and after the division of the families of the Levites. So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the Lord by the hand of Moses.”

Here we have Josiah taking the loftiest ground, and acting on the highest authority. The most cursory reader cannot fail to be arrested, as he scans the lines just quoted from the inspired record, by the names of “Solomon” — “David” — “Moses” — “all Israel” — and, above all, by the expression — so full of dignity, weight, and power — “That they may do according to the word of the Lord.” Most memorable words! May they sink down into our ears, and into our hearts! Josiah felt it to be his high and holy privilege to conform to the divine standard, notwithstanding all the errors and evils which had crept in, from age to age. God’s truth must stand forever. Faith owns and acts on this precious fact, and reaps accordingly. Nothing can be more lovely than the scene enacted on the occasion to which we are now referring. Josiah’s strict adherence to the word of the Lord is not more to be admired than his large-hearted devotedness and liberality. “He gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these were of the king’s substance. And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites,.....So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king’s commandment...And the singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king’s seer; and the porters waited at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them. So all the service of the Lord was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt offerings upon the altar of the Lord, according to the commandment of king Josiah. And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days. And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel, from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.”

What a picture! King, princes, priests, Levites, singers, porters, all Israel, Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem — all gathered together — all in their true place, and at their appointed work, — according to the word of the Lord” — and all this, “in the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah,” when the entire Jewish polity was on the very eve of dissolution. Surely this must speak to the heart of the thoughtful reader. It tells its own impressive tale, and teaches its own peculiar lesson. It tells us that no age, no circumstances, no influences, can ever change the truth of God, or dim the vision of faith. “The word of the Lord endureth forever” and faith grasps that word, and holds it fast, in the face of everything. It is the privilege of the believing soul to have to do with God and His eternal truth; and moreover, it is the duty of such a one to aim at the very loftiest standard of action, and to be satisfied with nothing lower. Unbelief will draw a plea from the condition of things around to lower the standard, to relax the grasp, to slacken the pace, to lower the tone. Faith says, “No!” emphatically and decidedly, “No!” Let us bow our heads in shame and sorrow, on account of our sin and failure, but keep the standard up. The failure is ours; the standard is God’s. Josiah wept and rent his clothes; hut he did not surrender the truth of God. He felt and owned that he and his brethren and his fathers had sinned, but that was no reason why he should not celebrate the passover according to the divine order. It was as imperative upon him to do right as it was upon Solomon, David, or Moses. It is our business to obey the word of the Lord, and we shall assuredly be blessed in our deed. This is one grand lesson to be drawn from the life and times of Josiah, and it is, undoubtedly, a seasonable lesson for our own times. May we learn it thoroughly! May we learn to adhere, with holy decision, to the ground on which the truth of God has set us,

and to occupy that ground with a larger measure of true devotedness to Christ and His cause!

Most gladly would we linger over the brilliant and soul-stirring scene presented in the opening verses of 2 Chron. 35, but we must bring this paper to an end, and we shall merely glance, very rapidly, at the solemn and admonitory close of Josiah's history. It stands in sad and painful contrast with all the rest of his most interesting career, and sounds in our ears a note of warning to which we are bound to give our most serious attention. We shall do little more than quote the passage, and then leave the reader to reflect upon it, prayerfully and humbly, in the presence of God.

"After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho, king of Egypt, came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not to the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo. And the archers shot at king Josiah; and the king said to his servants, Have me away, for I am sore wounded. His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchers of his fathers: and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and behold, they are written in the Lamentations." 2 Chron. 35:20-25.

All this is very sad and humbling. We do not wish to dwell upon it further than is absolutely needful for the purpose of instruction and admonition. The Holy Spirit does not expatiate; but He has recorded it for our learning. It is ever His way to give us men as they were — to write the history of their "deeds first and last" — good and bad — one as well as another. He tells us of Josiah's piety, at the "first;" and of his willfulness, at the "last." He shows us that so long as Josiah walked in the light of divine revelation, his path was illuminated by the bright beams of the divine countenance; but the moment he attempted to act for himself — to walk by the light of his own eyes — to travel off the straight and narrow way of simple obedience, that moment dark and heavy clouds gathered around him, and the course that had opened in sunshine, ended in gloom. Josiah went against Necho without any command from God, yea, he went in direct opposition to words spoken "from the mouth of God." He meddled with strife that belonged not to him, and he reaped the consequences.

"He disguised himself." Why do this, if he was conscious of acting for God? Why wear a mask, if treading the divinely appointed pathway? Alas! alas! Josiah failed in this, and in his failure he teaches us a salutary lesson. May we profit by it! May we learn, more than ever, to seek a divine warrant for all we do, and to do nothing without it. We can count on God, to the fullest extent, if we are walking in His way; but we have no security whatever, if we attempt to travel off the divinely appointed line. Josiah had no command to fight at Megiddo, and hence he could not count on divine protection. "He disguised himself;" but that did not shield him from the enemy's arrow. "The archers shot him" — they gave him his death-wound, and he fell, amid the tears and lamentations

of a people to whom he had endeared himself by a life of genuine piety and earnest devotedness.

May we have grace to imitate him in his piety and devotedness, and to guard against his willfulness. It is a serious thing for a child of God to persist in doing his own will. Josiah went to Megiddo when he ought to have tarried at Jerusalem, and the archers shot him and he died. Jonah went to Tarshish, when he ought to have gone to Nineveh, and he was flung into the deep. Paul persisted in going to Jerusalem, though the Spirit told him not, and he fell into the hands of the Romans. Now, all these were true, earnest, devoted servants of God; but they failed in these things; and though God overruled their failure for blessing, yet they had to reap the fruit of their failure, for "our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12

A Lively Faith

Lord, teach me how to trust in Thee,
And how, less unbelieving be;
To place on Thine unerring care
Those most I love, and leave them there.
For faith is not a mere belief,
That Thou canst aid, in bitter grief;
Oh! 'tis far greater blessings, Lord,
Are promised in Thy gracious word.
'Tis grasping Thee, when all are gone,
'Tis viewing Thee, when quite alone;
'Tis pillowing on Thine unseen arm,
Supported there, and free from harm.
Tis calm assurance all is well,
Though how, or where, I cannot tell;
'Tis heark'ning when no voice I hear,
'Tis smiling, though I weep and fear.
'Tis living in Thy blessed sight,
Where'er I breathe by day or night,
'Tis drinking in Thy tender love,
From all below, and all above.
'Tis putting on the garment white,
Preparing for the blessed sight
Of that rejoicing, glorious feast,
Which saints will share, from great to least.
Tis cleansing in Thy blood each stain,
And knowing pardon, peace again;

Tis deep remorse — yet grateful song,
Tis utter weakness — yet so strong.
'Tis stepping light, though burdened sore,
'Tis hating sin, yet more and more;
Tis fighting hard, and yet at rest,
Tis broken-hearted, and yet blest.
'Tis loving with unuttered love,
Though hard the heart, and slow to move;
Tis laboring, though 'tis all so small,
I count it laboring not at all.
Tis telling Thee my ev'ry thought,
'Tis finding all I've ever sought;
Tis treading on through life's lone walk,
In sweet companionship and talk.
'Tis joining in the angels' praise,
'Tis fixing high my eager gaze,
Where all is boundless love and peace,
And freedom marks the soul's release.
'Tis hurrying to a glorious end,
'Tis pressing towards my bosom Friend;
'Tis meeting Him, come, Jesus, come,
'Tis folding tent, and reaching home!

The Lowest Place

Our Lord and Savior, from Thy birth,
Thy footsteps to the cross we trace;
And all along Thy path on earth,
We see Thee take the lowest place.
The world — its bitter hate and scorn,
Was met by Thee with patient grace;
Its taunts in meekest silence borne,
For Thou didst take the lowest place.
Thus didst Thou pour contempt on pride,
The pride of Adam's fallen race:
For Thou didst all Thy glory hide,
To take for man the lowest place.
And for Thy Church Thou didst indeed,
O gracious Lord, Thyself abase;
As servant of Thy people's need,
Stoop down to take the lowest place.
That we might learn Thy lowly mind
(So fully hast Thou met our case)
And also have the joy to find,
Thy presence in the lowest place.
Yea, from the manger, to the cross,
We see Thee go with steadfast pace,
Enduring grief, reproach, and loss,
To suffer in the lowest place.
"A little while" our Lord, and we,
In glory shall behold Thy face,

Teach us till then, to take with Thee,
Thy place on earth — the lowest place.

The Morning Cometh

O hark! I have news, glad news for thee,
It has thrilled my soul with joy,
And to sound it abroad henceforth shall be
My life-long sweet employ.
The morning cometh! The radiant time
We have long'd for, draweth nigh!
O publish the tidings in every clime,
Proclaim them from earth to sky!
Hast thou watch'd in the gray dim light of dawn,
Ere the sunbeam shineth forth,
When all is still, save the fluttering breeze
Which stirreth and whispereth 'mid the trees,
And seemeth to call on their myriad leaves
To wake and to welcome the coming morn?
So methinks I have seen earth's stars grow dim
And her moonlight fade away;
And all around, I have heard the sound
Of His Spirit's breath, in this realm of death,
Bidding us wake and watch for Him!
And then as the sunbeam breaketh forth
And lighteth with glory the waking earth,
Hast thou heard the sweet burst of joyous praise
Which seemeth to rise in the morning lays
Of the wild birds to the sun?
Thus soon shall a song, a wondrous song,
Triumphant, glorious, free,

Hail the first ray of that endless day
And praise Him eternally!
For the morning cometh! The radiant time
We have longed for, draweth nigh.
O publish the tidings in every clime,
Proclaim them from earth to sky!
E. C. L.

Not Now

“He that had been possessed with the devil, prayed him that he might be with him.” — Mark 5:18.

Not now, my child, — a little more rough tossing —

A little longer on the billows' foam, —

A few more journeyings in the desert darkness,

And then the sunshine of thy Father's home!

Not now, — for I have wand'rers in the distance,

And thou must call them in with patient love;

Not now, — for I have sheep upon the mountains,

And thou must follow them where'er they rove.

Not now, — for I have loved ones sad and weary;

Wilt thou not cheer them with a kindly smile?

Sick ones, who need thee in their lonely sorrow;

Wilt thou not tend them yet a little while?

Not now, — for wounded hearts are sorely bleeding,

And thou must teach those widow'd hearts to sing;

Not now, — for orphans tears are thickly falling,

They must be gather'd 'neath some sheltering wing.

Not now, — for many a hungry one is pining;

Thy willing hand must be outstretch'd and free;

Thy Father hears the mighty cry of anguish,

And gives His answering messages to thee.

Not now, — for dungeon-walls look stern and gloomy,

And pris'ners' sighs sound strangely on the breeze —

Man's prisoners, but thy Saviour's noble free-men;

Hast thou no ministry of love for these?

Not now,—for hell's eternal gulf is yawning,

And souls are perishing in hopeless sin;
Jerusalem's bright gates are standing open, —
Go to the banish'd ones, and fetch them in!
Go with the name of Jesus to the dying,
And speak that Name in all its living power;
Why should thy fainting heart grow chill and weary?
Canst then not watch with Me one little hour?
One little hour! — and then the glorious crowning —
The golden harp-strings and the victor's palm; —
One little hour! — and then the Hallelujah!
Eternity's long, deep, thanksgiving psalm!
C. P.

The Parting

“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” “Lo! I am with you always.”

“It came — the parting,
And our weary hearts
Fell torn and bleeding at the feet
Of One who knew each pang —
His name — “the Man of Sorrows.”
No stranger He to grief — for once
Alone, despised, forsaken e’en of God;
His heart, divine, yet human, bore the load
Of all creation’s misery!
Man’s hatred too — He bore it all —
And yet loved on!
And now we needed not to call — for He
Had watched each moment of our fleeting joy
With tenderest sympathy — His ear
Had caught the “farewell” which the lips
Refused to utter — and His heart
O’erflow’d with love — with yearning, pitying love.
His arms He clasp’d around us, and our heads
Cradled upon His breast; while to each weary child
Spake He of rest. And from those lips
Dropped on each wounded heart the fragrant myrrh,
Soothing — restoring
Sweet was that hour of peace!
Deep as the ocean calm, when the waves are still’d,
When the wild winds sink to rest

And the last thunder-roll dies murmuring away
And faint grows the note of the storm-bird's cry
As she seeks her lonely nest.
But stealing — slowly stealing along the eastern sky
Are streaks of glory — harbingers of morn,
Telling of coming radiance — of a cloudless day.
So stealing — sweetly stealing upon the wondering soul
Came visions of His glory, of joys before unknown.
And on each list'ning ear fell there a sound
Of words most sweet. — speaking of love
Which could not change — of hope which fadeth not —
Of meetings in a land where partings come not
And only joy is known.

So He spake peace! And from each heart
Burst forth a song of praise! We could not grieve,
Each aching void was fill'd — for He was ours
And was not He enough?"

E. C. L.

Preaching Christ: What Is It? Part 1

“Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.” (Acts 8) This brief and simple statement embodies in it a grand characteristic feature of Christianity — a feature which distinguishes it from every system of religion that now exists, or that ever was propounded in this world. Christianity is not a set of abstractions — a number of dogmas — a system of doctrines. It is, preeminently, a religion of living facts — of divine realities — a religion which finds its center in a divine Person, the Man Christ Jesus. He is the foundation of all christian doctrine. From His divine and glorious Person all truth radiates. He is the living fountain whence all the streams issue forth in fullness, power, and blessing. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” Apart from Him all is death and darkness. There is not one atom of life, not one ray of light, in all this world, save what emanates from Him. A man may possess all the learning of the schools; he may bask in the most brilliant light that science can pour upon his understanding and his pathway; he may garnish his name with all the honors which his fellow mortals can heap upon him; but if there is the breadth of a hair between him and Jesus — if he is not in Christ and Christ in him — if he has not believed on the Name of the only begotten Son of God, he is involved in death and darkness. Christ is “the true light which lighteneth every man that cometh into the world;” and hence no man can, in a divine sense, be termed an enlightened man, save “a man in Christ.”

It is well to be clear as to this. It is needful to press it, in this day of man’s pride and pretension. Men are boasting of their light and intelligence — of the progress of civilization — of the research and discovery of the age in which our lot is cast — of the arts and sciences and what has been wrought and produced by their means. We do not want to touch these things. We are quite willing to let them stand for what they are really worth; but we are arrested by these words which fell from the Master’s lips, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Here it is, “He that followeth me.” Life and light are only to be had in Jesus. If a man is not following Jesus, he is plunged in death and darkness, even though he were possessed of the most commanding genius, and enriched with all the stores of science and knowledge.

Doubtless, we shall be deemed narrow-minded, in thus writing. We shall, by very many, be regarded as men of very contracted views indeed — men of one idea, and even that one idea presented in a one-sided way. Well, be it so. We are men of one idea; and we heartily desire we were more so. But what is that one idea? Christ. He is God’s grand idea, blessed be His Name, for evermore. Christ is the sum and substance of all that is in the mind of God. He is the central object in heaven — the grand fact of eternity — the object of God’s affection — of angels’ homage — of saints’ worship — of devils’ dread — the alpha and the omega of the divine counsels - the keystone of the arch of revelation — the central sun of God’s universe.

All this being so, we need not marvel at Satan’s constant effort to keep souls from coming to Christ, and to draw them away from Him, after they have come to Him. He hates Christ, and will use anything and everything to hinder the heart in getting hold of Him. He will use cares or

pleasures, poverty or riches, sickness or health, vice or morality, profanity or religion; in short, he cares not what it is, provided he can keep Jesus out of the heart.

On the other hand, the constant object of the Holy Ghost is to present Christ Himself to the soul. It is not something about Christ, doctrines respecting Him, or principles connected with Him merely; but His own very self, in living power and freshness. We cannot read a page of the New Testament without noticing this. The whole book, from the opening lines of Matthew, to the close of the Revelation, is simply a record of facts, as someone has truly said, respecting Jesus. It is not our purpose, just now, to follow out this record; to do so would be interesting beyond expression; but it would lead us away from our immediate thesis to which we must now, in the name of the Lord, and in dependence upon His Spirit, address ourselves. May it be unfolded and applied in the power of the Holy Ghost!

In studying scripture in connection with our subject, we shall find the Lord Jesus Christ presented in three ways, namely, as a test; as a victim; and as a model. Each of these points contains in itself a volume of truth, and when we view them in their connection, they open to our souls a wide field of christian knowledge and experience. Let us, then, in the first place, consider what is meant when we speak of CHRIST AS A TEST.

In contemplating the life of the Lord Jesus, as a man, we have the perfect exhibition of what a man ought to be. We see in Him the two grand creature perfections, namely, obedience and dependence. Though God over all, the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the wide universe — though He could say, “I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.” Yet so thoroughly and absolutely did He take the place of a man on this earth, that He could say, “the Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” (Isa. 1:3-5.)

He never moved one step without divine authority. “When the devil tempted Him to work a miracle, in order to satisfy His hunger,” His reply was, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord.” He would readily work a miracle to feed others, but not to feed Himself. Again, when tempted to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, He replied, “It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” He had no command from God to cast Himself down, and He could not act without it; to do so would be a tempting of Providence. So also, when tempted with the offer of all the kingdoms of this world, on condition of doing homage to Satan, His reply was, “It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God. and him only shalt thou serve.”

In a word, the Man Christ Jesus, was perfectly obedient. Nothing could tempt Him to diverge the breadth of a hair from the narrow path of obedience. He was the obedient Man from first to last. It was quite the same to Him where He served, or what He did. He would only act by the authority of the divine word. He would take bread from God; He would come to His temple when sent of God, and He would wait for God’s time to receive the kingdoms of this world. His obedience was absolute and uninterrupted, from the manger to the cross, and in this He was well pleasing to God. It was creature perfection; and nothing in any wise different from this could be agreeable to God. If perfect obedience is grateful to God, then disobedience must be hateful. The life of Jesus, in this

one feature of it, was a continual feast to the heart of God. His perfect obedience was continually sending up a cloud of the most fragrant incense to the throne of God.

Now, this is what a man ought to be. We have here a perfect test of man's condition; and when we look at ourselves in the light of this one ray of Christ's glory, we must see our entire departure from the true and only proper place of the creature. The light that shines from the character and ways of Jesus reveals, as nothing else could reveal, the moral darkness of our natural state. We are not obedient; we are willful; we do our own pleasure; we have cast off the authority of God; His word does not govern us. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be." (Rom. 8)

It may be asked, "Did not the law make manifest the willfulness and enmity of our hearts?" No doubt; but who can fail to see the difference between a law demanding obedience, and the Son of God, as Man, exhibiting obedience? Well then, in so far as the life and ways of the blessed Lord Jesus Christ transcend in glory the entire legal system, and in so far as the Person of Christ transcends in glory and dignity the person of Moses, just so far does Christ, as a test of man's condition, exceed, in moral power, the law of Moses; and the same holds good of every test that was ever applied, and every other standard that was ever set up. The Man Christ Jesus, viewed in the one point of perfect obedience, is an absolutely perfect test by which our natural state can be tried and made manifest.

But take another ray of Christ's moral glory. He was as absolutely dependent upon God, as He was obedient to Him. He could say, "preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust." (Psalm 16) And again, "I was cast upon thee from the womb." (Psalm 22) He never, for one moment, abandoned the attitude of entire dependence upon the living God. It is befitting the creature to be dependent upon God for everything. This the blessed Jesus ever was. He breathed the very atmosphere of dependence, all the way through from Bethlehem to Calvary. He was the only man that ever lived a life of uninterrupted dependence upon God, from first to last. Others have depended partially, He did it perfectly. Others have occasionally, or, it may be, mainly looked to God; He never looked anywhere else. He found all His springs; not some of them, or most of them, in God.

This, too, was most grateful to God. To have a man, on this earth, whose heart was never, for one single moment of time, out of the attitude of dependence, was ineffably precious to the Father, and hence, again and again, heaven opened, and the testimony came forth, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But, if this feature in the perfect life of the Man, Christ Jesus, was infinitely agreeable to the mind of God, it also furnishes an infinitely powerful test of the natural state of man. We can here see, as we can see nowhere else, our apostasy from the creature's only proper place — the place of dependence. True, the inspired historian informs us, in Gen. 3 that the first Adam fell from his original place of obedience and dependence. True, also, the law of Moses makes manifest that Adam's descendants are, every one of them, in a condition of revolt and independence; but who can fail to see with what superior power all this is brought out by the life and ways of Jesus, in this world? In Him we see a man perfectly obedient and perfectly dependent, and that, too, in the midst of a scene of disobedience and independence, and in the face of every temptation to abandon the position which He occupied.

Thus, the life of Jesus, in this one particular point of perfect dependence, tests man's condition, and proves his entire departure from God. Man, in his natural state, ever seeks to be independent of God. We need not go into any detailed proof of this. This one ray of light, emanating from the glory of Christ, and shining into man's heart, lays bare every chamber thereof, and proves beyond all question — proves, in a way that naught else could prove, man's departure from God, proves the haughty independence which marks our natural condition. The more intense the light which you bring to bear upon an object, the more perfectly you can see what it is. There is a vast difference between looking at a picture in the dim morning twilight, and examining it in broad daylight. Thus it is, exactly, in reference to our real state by nature. We may view it in the light of the law, in the light of conscience, in the light of the loftiest standard of morality known amongst men; and, so viewing it, we may see that it is not what it ought to be; but it is only when we view it in the full blaze of the moral glory of Christ that we can see it as it really is. It is one thing to say, "We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and left undone those things which we ought to have done;" and it is another thing altogether to see ourselves in that perfect light which makes everything manifest. It is one thing to look at our ways in the light of law, conscience, or morality, and another thing to look at our nature, in the light of that all-powerful test, namely, the life of the Man Christ Jesus.

But we must proceed, and shall merely refer to one more feature in the character of Christ, and that is His perfect self-emptiness. He never once sought His own interest, in anything. His was a life of constant self-sacrifice. "The Son of Man has come to serve and to give." These two words "serve" and "give" formed the motto of His life, and were written, in letters of blood, upon His cross. In His marvelous life, and in His mysterious death, He was the Servant and the Giver. He was ever ready to answer every form of human need. We see Him, at Sychar's lonely well, opening the fountain of living water to a poor thirsty soul. We see Him, at the pool of Bethesda, imparting strength to a poor impotent cripple. We see Him, at the gate of Nain, drying the widow's tears, and giving back to her bosom her only son.

All this and much more we see; but we never see Him looking after His own interests. No, never! We cannot too deeply ponder this fact in the life of Jesus; nor can we too jealously scrutinize ourselves in the light which this wondrous fact emits. If in the light of His perfect obedience, we can detect our terrible willfulness; if in the light of His absolute dependence, we can discern our pride and haughty independence; then surely, in the light of His self-emptiness and self-sacrifice, we may discover our gross selfishness, in its ten thousand forms, and as we discover it, we must loathe and abhor ourselves. Jesus never thought of Himself, in anything he ever said or did. He found His meat and His drink in doing the will of God, and in meeting the need of man.

What a test is here! How it proves us! How it makes manifest what is in us, by nature! How it sheds its bright light over man's nature and man's world, and rebukes both the one and the other! For what, after all, is the great root-principle of nature and of this world? Self. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." (Psalm 49) Self-interest is really the governing principle in the life of every unrenewed man, woman, and child, in this world. No doubt, nature may clothe itself in very amiable and attractive forms — it may assume a very generous and benevolent aspect — it can scatter as well as hoard; but of this we may rest assured, that the unregenerate man is wholly incapable of rising above self as an object; and in no way could this be made so thoroughly manifest — in no way could it be developed with such force and clearness — in no way could its

vileness and hideousness be so fully detected and judged, as in the light of that per-feet test presented in the disinterested, self-sacrificing life of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. It is when that penetrating light shines upon us that we see ourselves in all our true native depravity and personal vileness.

The Lord Jesus came into this world, and lived a perfect life — perfect in thought, perfect in word, perfect in action; He perfectly glorified God, and not only so, but He perfectly tested man. He showed what God is, and He showed also what man ought to be — showed it not merely in His doctrine, but in His walk. Man was never so tested before, and, hence, the Lord Jesus could say, “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.” John 15:22-24.

Again, He says, “I judge no man; and yet if I judge, my judgment is true.” (John 8:16.) The object of His mission was not judgment but salvation, yet the effect of His life was judgment upon everyone with whom He came in contact. It was impossible for anyone to stand in the light of Christ’s moral glory, and not be judged in the very center and source of His being. When Peter saw himself in that light, he exclaimed, “Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Luke 5.

Such was the certain result of a man’s seeing himself in the presence of Christ. Not all the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai — not all the denunciations of the legal system — not all the voices of the prophets could produce such an effect upon a sinner as one single ray of the moral glory of Christ darting into his soul. I may look at the law and feel I have not kept it, and own I deserve its curse; conscience may terrify me and tell me I deserve hell-fire because of my sins. All this is true: but oh! the very moment I see myself in the light of what Christ is, my whole moral being is laid bare — every root every fiber, every motive spring, every element, all the sources of thought, feeling, desire, affection, and imagination are exposed to view, and I abhor myself. It cannot possibly be otherwise. The whole book of God proves it. The history of all God’s people illustrates it. To adduce cases would fill a volume. True conviction is produced in the soul when the Holy Ghost lets in upon it the light of the glory of Christ. Law is a reality, conscience is a reality, and the Spirit of God may and does make use of the former to act on the latter; but it is only when I see myself in the light of what Christ is, that I get a just view of myself, and then I am led to exclaim, with Job, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself”

Reader, have you ever seen yourself in this way? Have you ever really tested yourself by the perfect standard of the life of Christ? It may be you have been looking at your fellow man and comparing yourself with that imperfect standard, and trying yourself by that imperfect test. This will never do. Christ is the true standard — the perfect test — the divine touchstone. God cannot have anything different from Christ. You must be like Him — conformed to His image, ere you can find your place in the presence of God. Do you ask, “How can this ever be?” By knowing Christ as the Victim, and by being formed after Him as the Model. But these points must be unfolded, if the Lord will, in our next.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Preaching Christ: What Is It? Part 2

It is most needful, ere we proceed with the subject which has been engaging our attention, that the whole world, as such, and each human heart, in particular, should be seen and judged in the light of the moral glory of Christ — that divine and perfect test by which everyone and everything must be tried. Christ is God's standard for all; and the more fully and faithfully the world and self are measured thereby, the better. The grand question for the whole world, and for each human heart, is this, "How has Christ been treated? — what have we done with Him?" God sent His only begotten Son into the world, as the expression of His love to sinners. He said, "It may be they will reverence my Son, when they see him." Did they do so? Alas! no. "They said, This is the heir; come let us kill him." It was thus the world treated Christ.

And, be it observed, it was not the world, in its dark pagan form, that so treated the blessed One. No; it was the world of the religious Jew, and of the polished and cultivated Greek. It was not into the dark places of the earth, as men speak, that Jesus came; but into the very midst of His own highly favored people "who were Israelites; to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." It was to them He came, in meekness, lowliness, and love. It was among them He lived and labored, and "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him." How did they treat Him? This is the question; let us ponder it deeply, and ponder, too, the answer. They preferred a murderer to the holy, spotless, loving Jesus. The world — the heart, got its choice. Jesus and Barabbas were set before it; and the question was put, "Which will you have?" What was the answer — the deliberate, determined, answer? "Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."

Tremendous fact! — a fact little weighed, little understood, little entered into — a fact which stamps the character of this present world, and tests and makes manifest the state of every unrepentant, unconverted heart beneath the canopy of heaven. If I want a true view of the world — of nature — of the human heart — of myself, whither shall I turn? To police reports? To the calendars of our Grand Juries? To the various statistics of the social and moral condition of our cities and towns? Nay; all these, it is true, may set before us facts which fill the soul with horror, and make the blood run cold. But let it be distinctly seen, and deeply felt, that all the facts that were ever recorded of crime, in its blackest and most fearful forms, are not to be compared with that one fact, the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory. This crime stands cut in bold and black relief from the background of man's entire history, and fixes the true condition of the world, of man, of nature, of self.

Now, it is this we are anxious to urge upon the heart of the reader, ere we proceed to the second division of our subject. We do want, him to seize this great, this potent fact. We have, again and again, referred to it, in the pages of "Things New and Old;" but it cannot possibly be too much enforced. It is the only way in which to get a right sense of what the world is, and of what the human heart is. Men may speak of the vast improvement which has taken place in the world, and

of the dignity of human nature; but ah! the heart turns back to that hour in the which the world, when called to make a choice between the Lord of glory and a murderer, deliberately selected the latter and nailed the former to a tree, between two malefactors. This crime of crimes remains, so far as the world is concerned, uncanceled, unforgiven. It stands recorded, in dark and awful characters, on the eternal page. And not only is this so, as regards the world as a whole, but it also holds good, in reference to the unrepentant, unconverted reader of these lines. The solemn question still remains to be answered — answered by the world — answered by the individual sinner, namely, “What have you done with the Son of God? What has become of Him? How have you treated Him?” Of what use is it to point to the progress of the human race? to the march of civilization? to the advance of the arts and sciences? to railroads and telegraphs? to Armstrong guns and iron clad ships? to the ten thousand forms in which human genius has tasked itself in order to minister to human lust, luxury and self-indulgence! All these things might be far outweighed by the misery, the moral degradation, the squalid poverty, the ignorance and vice in which more than nine-tenths of the human race are, at this moment, involved.

But it is not thus we meet the question at all. We do not attempt to put barbarism against civilization, poverty against luxury, grossness against refinement, ignorance against intelligence; by no means. We have but the one test, the one standard, the one gauge, and that is the cross to which Jesus was nailed by the representatives of this world’s religion, its science, its politics, and its civilization.

It is here we take our stand and ask this question, Has the world ever yet repented of this act? Nay; for had it done so, the kingdoms of this world would have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. It is here we take our stand, and ask the reader, ‘Have you repented of this act? He may say, “I never did it. It was done by wicked Jews and wicked Romans, eighteen hundred and thirty-three years ago. How could I be counted guilty of a crime which was committed so many centuries before I was born?”’

We reply, It was the act of the world, and you are either, at this moment, part and parcel of that world which stands before God under the guilt of the murder of His Son, or you have, as a repentant and converted soul, found refuge and shelter in the pardoning love of God. There is no middle ground, and the more clearly you see this the better, for in no way can you have a just sense of the condition of this world, or of your own heart, save in the light which is cast thereon by the life and death of Christ, as a test. We cannot stop short of this mark, if we would form a true estimate of the character of the world, the nature of man, the condition of the unconverted soul. In so far as the world is concerned, there can be no real improvement in its condition, no radical change in its state, until the sword of divine judgment has settled the question of its treatment of the Son of God; and, in so far as the individual sinner is concerned, the divine testimony is, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

But this leads us, in the second place, to contemplate

CHRIST AS A VICTIM.

This is a much more pleasing subject to dwell upon, though, surely, the other must never be omitted, in preaching Christ. It is too much lost sight of in our preaching. We do not sufficiently press home upon the conscience of the sinner, Christ both in life and death, as a test of nature’s

true condition, and a proof of its irremediable ruin. The law may be used, and rightly so, no doubt, to do its testing work in the conscience, and yet, through the blindness and folly of our hearts, we may attempt to take up that very law in order to work out a righteousness for ourselves — that law by which, when rightly viewed, is the knowledge of sin. But it is impossible for anyone to have his eyes opened to see the death of Christ as the terrible exhibition of the enmity of the heart against God, and not be convinced of this that he is utterly and hopelessly ruined and undone. This is true repentance. It is the moral judgment, not merely of my acts, but of my nature, in the light of the cross as the only perfect test of what that nature really is.

All this is very fully brought out, in the preaching of Peter, in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. Look, for example, at the second chapter, where we find the Holy Ghost presenting Christ both as a test and as a victim. “Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did, by him, in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.....Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Here we have solemn and pungent dealing with conscience as to the way in which they had treated the Lord’s Anointed. It was not merely that they had broken the law; that was true; nor yet that they had merely rejected all the inferior messengers, the minor witnesses that had been sent to them; that was equally true, but that was not all; they had actually crucified and slain “a man approved of God,” and that Man none other than the Son of God Himself. This was the naked and startling fact which the inspired preacher urges home, with solemn emphasis, upon the consciences of his hearers.

And, mark the result! “Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” No marvel, surely, that they were pierced to the very heart. Their eyes were open, and what did they discover? Why, that they were actually at issue with God Himself — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And about what were they at issue? About the law? Nay. About the prophets? Nay. About the rites and ceremonies, the statutes and institutions of the Mosaic economy? Nay. All this was true, and bad enough. But there was something far beyond all this. Their guilt had reached its culminating point in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. “The God of Abraham and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead whereof we are witnesses.”

This truly was and is the climax of man’s guilt, and when brought home, in the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, to any heart in all this world, it must produce true repentance, and evoke from the depths of the soul the earnest inquiry, “Men and brethren, what shall I do?” “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” It is not merely that we have failed in keeping the law, in doing our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbor, in living as we ought; all this alas! is but too true. But oh! we have been guilty of the dreadful sin of crucifying the Son of God. Such is the measure of human guilt, and

such was the truth pressed home by Peter on the consciences of the men of his time.

And what then? When the sharp edge of this powerful testimony had penetrated the hearts of the hearers — when the arrow from the quiver of the Almighty had pierced the soul, and drawn forth the bitter penitential cry, “What shall we do?” What was the answer? What had the preacher to say? “Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” So also in the third chapter, he says, “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

Here, then, we have the two things, very distinctly, presented, namely, Christ as a test and Christ as a victim — the cross as the exhibition of man’s guilt, and the cross as the exhibition of the love of God. “Ye killed the Prince of life.” Here was the arrow for the conscience. “But those things which God before had showed that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.” Here was the healing balm. It was the determinate counsel of God that Christ should suffer, and, while it was perfectly true that man had displayed his hatred of God in nailing Jesus to the cross, yet no sooner is any soul made sensible of this, and thus brought to divine conviction, than the Holy Ghost holds up to view that very cross as the foundation of the counsels of redeeming love, and the ground of the full remission of sins to every true believer.

Thus it was, in that most touching scene between Joseph and his brethren, as recorded in Gen. 44 and 45. The guilty brethren are made to pass through deep and painful exercises of heart, until, at length, they stand in the presence of their injured brother, with the arrow of conviction piercing their inmost soul. Then, but not until then, these soothing accents fall upon their ears, “Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.....So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God,”

Exquisite, matchless grace! The moment they entered the place of confession, Joseph was in the place of forgiveness. This was divine. “He spake roughly to them,” when they were thoughtless as to their sin; but no sooner did they give utterance to these words, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother,” than they were met by the sweet response of grace, “It was not you, but God.”

Thus it is, beloved reader, in every case. The very instant the sinner takes the place of contrition, God takes the place of full and free forgiveness; and, most assuredly, when God forgives, the sinner is forgiven. “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” Psalm 32.

And would we have it otherwise? Surely not. An hard heart, an unbroken spirit, an unreached conscience, could not understand, or make a right use of such words as, “Be not grieved; it was not you, but God.” How could it? How could an impenitent heart appreciate accents which are only designed to soothe and tranquillize a broken and contrite spirit? Impossible. To tell a hard-hearted impenitent sinner not to be grieved, would be fatally false treatment. Joseph could not possibly have said to his brethren, “Be not grieved with yourselves” until they had said and felt “We are verily guilty.”

Such is the order, and it is well to remember it. "I will confess, and thou forgavest." The moment the sinner takes his true place in the presence of God, there is not one syllable said to him about his sins except it be to tell him that they are all forgiven and all forgotten. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." God not only forgives but forgets. The convicted sinner stands and gazes upon the cross, and sees himself in the light of the glory of Christ, as the divine and perfect test, and cries out, "What shall I do?" How is he answered? By the unfolding of Christ, as a victim, slain by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

And who can define the feelings of a soul that has been convicted of desiring a murderer and crucifying the Son of God, when he learns that that very crucified One is the channel of pardon and life to him — that the blood which was shed puts away forever the guilt of shedding it? What language can adequately set forth the emotion of one who has seen his guilt, not merely in the light of the ten commandments, but as shown out in the cross of a world-rejected Jesus; and yet knows and believes that his guilt is all and forever put away? Who could attempt to embody in language the feelings of Joseph's brethren when they felt his tears of affection dropping upon them? What a scene! Tears of contrition and tears of affection mingled! Precious mixture! The mind of God alone can duly estimate its value and sweetness.

But here let us just guard against misunderstanding. Let no one suppose, for a moment, that tears of contrition are the procuring cause of pardon, or the meritorious ground of peace. Far — far away be the thought from the reader's mind! All the tears of contrition that ever gushed forth from the fountains of broken hearts, from the days of Joseph's brethren to the days of the third of Acts, and from these latter to the present moment, could not form the just foundation of a sinner's acceptance and peace with God, or wash away a single stain from the human conscience. The blood of the divine Victim, and that alone, in prospect from the fall of man to Calvary, and in retrospect, from Calvary till this moment — naught save that precious blood — that atoning death — that peerless sacrifice could justify a holy God in forgiving one sin. But, blessed be God, so perfectly has that sacrifice vindicated and glorified His Name, that the very moment any sinner sees his true state — his guilt — his rebellion — his enmity — his base ingratitude — his hatred of God and of His Christ; the very moment he takes the place of true contrition in the divine presence — the place of one utterly broken down, without plea or palliation — that moment, infinite grace meets him with those healing, soothing, tranquillizing words, "Be not grieved" — "your sins and iniquities will I remember no more" — "Go in peace."

Some might suppose that we attach undue importance to the measure of contrition, or that we mean to teach that everyone must feel the same character or degree of conviction as was produced by Peter's powerful appeal in the second of Acts. Nothing is further from our thoughts. We believe there must and there will be conviction and contrition; and further we believe that the cross is the only adequate measure of human guilt - that it is only in the light of that cross that anyone can have a just sense of the vileness, sinfulness, and loathsomeness of his nature. But all may not see this. Many there are who never think of the cross as a test and proof of their guilt, but merely at the blessed ground of their pardon. They are bowed down under a sense of their manifold sins and shortcomings, and they look to the cross of Christ as the alone ground of pardon; and, most surely they are right. But there is something deeper than this. There is a deeper view of sin — a deeper sense of what human nature, in its fallen state, really is — a deeper

conviction of the utterly godless and christless condition of the heart. And where is this to be reached? At the cross, and there alone. It will never do to look back at the men of the first century, and say what terrible sinners they were to crucify the living embodiment of all that was holy and good, gracious and pure. No; what is needed is to bring the cross forward into this our own nineteenth century and measure nature, the world, and self thereby.

This, be assured of it, reader, is the true way to judge the question. There is no real change. "Crucify him! Crucify him!" is as positively the cry of the world of the nineteenth century as it was of the world of the first. The cross was, then, and is, now, the only true measure of human guilt; and when any one, man, woman, or child is brought to see this, he has a far deeper sense of his condition than ever he can have by looking at his sins and short-comings in the light of conscience, or of the ten commandments.

And to what, let us inquire, will all this lead the soul? What will be the effect of seeing self in the light which the cross, as a test, throws upon it? The deepest self-aborrence. Yes, and this holds good in the case of the most refined moralist, and amiable pietist that ever lived, just as much as in the case of the grossest and vilest sinner. It is no longer a question of grades and shades of character, to be settled by the graduated scale of human conscience or the moral sense. Oh! no; the cross is seen as the only perfect standard. Nature, the world, the heart, self, is measured by that standard, and its true condition reached and judged.

We are intensely anxious that the reader should thoroughly enter into this point. If we mistake not, he will find it to be of immense moral power in forming his convictions, both as to his own heart, and as to the real character of the world through which he is passing — its moral foundations — its framework — its features — its principles — its spirit — its aim — its end. We want him to take the cross as the perfect measure of himself and all around him. Let him not listen to the suggestions of Satan, to the thoughts that spring up in his own heart, to the vaporings of philosophy and science, falsely so-called, to the infidel vauntings of this pre-eminently infidel age. Let him listen to the voice of holy scripture, which is the voice of the living God. Let him use the test which scripture furnishes, and that is a crucified Christ, and let him try all by that, and see where that will lead him. One thing is certain, it will lead him down, in his own self-consciousness, into those profound depths where naught can avail him save Christ as the divine Victim who bore the judgment of God against sin, and opened heaven to the sinner.

(To be continued if the Lord will.)

Preaching Christ: What Is It? Part 3

Having, in our numbers for March and April, sought to present Christ as a test, and Christ as a victim, we shall now, in dependence upon divine guidance and teaching, proceed to consider Him, as

THE MODEL,

to which the Holy Ghost seeks to conform every true believer. This will give great completeness to our subject, and open up a wide field of thought to the christian reader. God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Rom. 8) But how, it may be asked, can we ever be formed after such a model? How can we ever think of being conformed to such an image? The answer to these inquiries will unfold, still more fully, the blessedness and infinite value of the truth which has already passed before us. If the reader has followed the line of thought we have been pursuing — if he has experimentally entered into it, or if it has entered into him, in the power of the Spirit of God — if, in a word, he has made his own of it, he will see, and feel, and own, that in himself, by nature, there is not a single atom of good, not one point on which he can rest his hopes for eternity. He will see that, so far as he is concerned, he is a total wreck; and, moreover, that the divine purpose, as revealed in the gospel, is not to reconstruct this moral wreck, but to erect an entirely new thing. Of this new thing, the cross of Christ is the foundation.

The reader cannot ponder this too deeply. Christianity is not the old nature made better, but the new nature implanted. “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3) “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” 2 Cor. 5.

The effect of the mission of Christ to this world was to prove, as nothing else could have proved, man’s totally irremediable ruin. When man rejected and crucified the Son of God, his ease was proved to be hopeless. It is of the deepest importance to be thoroughly clear as to this. It solves a thousand difficulties, and clears the prospect of many a dark and heavy cloud. So long as a man be possessed with the idea that he must improve his nature, by any process whatever, so long he must be a total stranger to the fundamental truth of Christianity.

There is, alas! a fearful amount of darkness and error abroad, in the professing Church, as to this simple truth of the gospel. Man’s total ruin is denied or reasoned away, in one way or another; and the very truths of Christianity as well as the institutions of the Mosaic economy, are made use of to improve fallen nature and fit it for the presence of God. Thus the true nature of sin is not felt; the claims of holiness are not understood; the free, full, and sovereign grace of God is set aside; and the sacrificial death of Christ is thrown overboard.

The sense of all this makes us long for more earnestness, power, and faithfulness in setting forth those old foundation truths which are constantly affirmed and maintained in the New Testament.

We believe it to be the solemn duty of every writer and every speaker, of all authors, editors, preachers, and teachers to make a firm stand against the strong current of opposition to the simplest truths of divine revelation, so painfully and alarmingly apparent in every direction. There is an urgent demand for faithfulness in maintaining the standard of pure truth, not in a spirit of controversy, but in meekness, earnestness, and simplicity. We want to have Christ preached as a test of all that is in man — in nature — in the world. We want Christ preached as a victim, bearing all that was due to our sins; and we want Him preached as a model on which we are to be formed, in all things.

This is Christianity. It is not fallen nature trying to work out righteousness by keeping the law of Moses. Neither is it fallen nature striving to imitate Christ. No; it is the complete setting aside of fallen nature, as an utterly good-for-nothing thing, and the reception of a crucified and risen Christ, as the foundation of all our hopes for time and eternity. How could the unrenewed sinner get righteousness by keeping the law, by the which is the knowledge of sin? How could he ever set about such a work as “The imitation of Christ?” Utterly impossible. “He must be born again.” He must get new life in Christ, ere he can exhibit Christ. This cannot be too strongly insisted upon. For an unconverted man to think of imitating the example, or walk in the footsteps of Jesus, is the most hopeless thing in the world. Ah! no; the only effect of looking at the blessed example of Jesus is to put us in the dust in self-abasement and true contrition; and when from this place we lift our eyes to the cross of Calvary to which Jesus was nailed, as our surety, our sin-bearer, our divine substitute, we see pardon and peace flowing down to us through His most precious sacrifice; then, but not until then, we can calmly and happily sit down to study Him as our model.

Thus, if I look at the life of Jesus, apart from His atoning death — if I measure myself by that perfect standard — if I think of working myself into conformity to such an image, it must plunge me in utter despair. But when I behold that perfect, spotless, holy One bearing my sins in His own body on the tree — when I see Him lying in His death and resurrection the everlasting foundation of life, and peace, and glory for me, then, with a peaceful conscience, and liberated heart, I can look back over the whole of that marvelous life and see therein how I am to walk, for “He has left us an example, that we should follow his steps.” Thus, while Christ, as a test, shows me my guilt; Christ, as a victim, cancels that guilt; and Christ, as a model, shines before the vision of my soul, as the standard at which I am to aim continually. In a word, Christ is my life, and Christ is my model; and the Holy Ghost, who has taken up His abode in me, on the ground of accomplished redemption, works in me for the purpose of conforming me to the image of Christ. True, I must ever feel and own how infinitely short I come of that lofty standard; still, Christ is my life, though the manifestation of that life is sadly hindered by the infirmities and corruptions of my old nature. The life is the same, as the Apostle John says, “Which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” (1 John 2:8.) We can never be satisfied with aught less than this, namely, “Christ, our life — Christ, our model.” “For me to live is Christ.” It was Christ reproduced, in the daily life of Paul, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is true Christianity. It is not flesh turned religious and leading a pious life. It is not unrenewed, fallen, ruined nature trying to recover itself, by rites and ceremonies, prayers, alms, and vigils. It is not the old man turning from “wicked works” to “dead works” — exchanging the gin palace, the theater, the gaming table, and the race course, for the cloister, the pew, the meeting house, or the lecture haft. No, reader; it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory;” and Christ reproduced in your daily

life, by the powerful ministry of God the Holy Ghost.

Be not deceived! It is of no possible use for fallen nature to clothe itself in forms of piety. It may do so — it may betake itself to the attractive appliances of ritualism — to sacred music — pious pictures — sculpture — architecture — dim religious light — it may scatter, in princely profusion, the fruits of a large-hearted benevolence — it may visit the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shed on all around the sunshine of a genial philanthropy — it may read the Bible and go through every form of religious routine — it may even attempt a specious and hollow imitation of Christ — schoolmen may discipline it, quietists may subdue it, mystics may enwrap it in their cloudy reveries, and lead it into quiet contemplation, with nothing to contemplate — in short, all that religion, morality, and philosophy can do for it and with it, may be done, and all in vain, inasmuch as it still remains true that, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” — “It cannot see or enter the kingdom of God” — “ye must be born again.”

Here lies the deep and solid, the divine and eternal foundation of Christianity. There must be the life of Christ in the soul — the link with “the Second Man, the last Adam.” The first man has been condemned and set aside. The Second Man came and stood beside the first, He proved him and tested him, and showed out, most fully, that there was not a single ingredient in his nature, his character, or his condition which could be made available in that new creation, that heavenly kingdom which was about to be introduced — that not a single stone or timber in the old building could be worked into the new — that “in the flesh dwelleth no good thing” — and, finally, that the ground must be thoroughly cleared of all the rubbish of ruined humanity, and the foundation laid in the death of the Second Man, who, in resurrection, has become, as the last Adam, the Head of the new creation. Apart from Him there is, and can be, no life. “He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:12.

Such is the conclusive language of Holy Scripture, and this language must hold good, in spite of all the reasonings of those who boast themselves in their liberal and enlightened views - the compass of their intellectual powers - and the breadth of their theology. It matters but little indeed what men may think or say; we have only to hearken to the word of our God which must stand forever, and that word declares, “Ye must be born again.” Men cannot alter this. There is a kingdom which can never be moved, and, in order to see or enter this heavenly kingdom, we must be born again. Man has been tried in every way, and proved wanting, and now, “Once, in the end of the ages, hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Heb. 9:26.

This is the only ground of life and peace, and when the soul is firmly settled thereon, it can find its delight in studying Christ as its model. It is done with all its own poor efforts to obtain life, pardon, and the favor of God; it flings aside its “deadly doings;” it has found life in Jesus, and now its grand business is to study Him, to mark His footsteps and walk therein — to do as He did, to aim always at being like Him; to seek, in everything, to be conformed to Him. The great question for the Christian, on all occasions, is not, “What harm is there in this or that?” but, “Is this like Christ?” He is our divine, pattern. Are husbands exhorted to love their wives? It is “As Christ loved the church.” What a model! Who can ever come up to it? No one; but we are still to keep it before us; and thus we shall enter into the truth of those lines of our own poet,

“The more thy glories strike mine eyes,

The humbler I shall lie,

Thus while I sink, my joys shall rise

Immeasurably high.”

The christian reader will, at once, perceive what a wide field of practical truth is opened up by this closing point in our subject. What an unspeakable privilege to be able, day by day, to sit down and study the life and ways of our Great Exemplar — to see what He was — to mark His words, His spirit, His style — to trace Him in all the details of His marvelous path — to note how “He went about doing good” — how it was His meat and His drink to do the will of God, and to minister to the need of man. And then to think that He loves us, that He died for us, that He is our life, that He has given us of His Spirit to be the spring of power in our souls, for the subjugation of all that is of the old root of self, and the producing, in our daily life, the expression of Christ.

What mortal tongue can unfold the preciousness of all this? It is not living by rules and regulations — it is not in pursuing a dead round of duties — it is not in subscribing to certain dogmas of religious belief — no; it is union with Christ and the manifestation of Christ. This, we repeat, and reiterate, and would impress upon the reader, this and nothing less, nothing different, is true, genuine, living Christianity. Let him see that he possesses it, for if not, he is dead in trespasses and sins; he is far from God, and far from the kingdom of God. But if, on the other hand, he has been led to believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God; if as a consciously ruined and guilty sinner he has fled for refuge to the blood of the cross, then, in very deed, Christ is his life, and it should be his one unvarying object, day by day, to study his model, to fix his eye on the headline and aim at coming as near to that as possible. This is the true secret of all practical godliness and sanctification. It is this which alone constitutes a living Christianity, and it stands in vivid contrast with what is commonly called “a religious life,” which, alas! very often resolves itself into a mere dead routine, a rigid adherence to lifeless forms, a barren ritualism, which, so far from exhibiting aught of the freshness and reality of the new man in Christ, is positively a distortion of nature itself. Christianity brings a living Christ into the heart, and into the life. It diffuses, thus, a divine influence all around. It enters into all the relations and associations of human life. It teaches us how to act as husbands, as fathers, as masters, as children, as servants. It teaches us not by dry rules and regulations, but by setting before us, in the Person of Christ, a perfect model of what we ought to be. It presents to our view the very One who, as a test, left us without a single plea, and, as a victim, left us without a single stain, and who now, as our model, is to be the subject of our admiring study, and the standard at which we are ever and only to aim. It does not matter where we are or what we are, provided Christ be dwelling in the heart, and exhibited in the daily life. If we have Him in the heart and before the eye, it will regulate everything; and if we have not Him, we have nothing.

We shall here close our paper; not, surely, because our theme is exhausted, but because it is inexhaustible, and further because we believe that the Spirit of God alone can open the subject and apply it, in living power and freshness to the soul of the reader, and thus lead him into a higher type of Christianity than is ordinarily exhibited, in this day of widely extended and worldly profession. May the Lord stir up all our hearts, to seek greater nearness to Himself, and more faithful conformity to Him, in all our ways! May we be enabled to say, with a little more truth and sincerity, “Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus

Christ; who shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Saved or Lost?

Dear Reader, — The thought, that we have again reached the close of another year, awakens afresh the oft-repeated question all the year round — Art thou prepared for the more solemn — the final close? At all times, we may say, and in every form, we take occasion to keep before our readers this one, grand question; still, it seems natural to press it with peculiar earnestness at the close of the year. At such a time we cannot help being reminded, that we are fast hastening on to a long — a never ending eternity: an eternity of unmingled blessedness or of unmeasured woe.

The season of the year is like the voice of God to Israel of old: “Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways” (Hag. 1:5); or, like the traveler that has reached the top of the hill, and who is disposed to pause a little and look around him.

Oh! that my dear reader, if unprepared for the end of the journey, may indeed pause, and think seriously on that important future. The end may be near. But, near or remote, what can be more certain, what can be more solemn, what can be more thy immediate concern, than thine own eternity? Where is it to be spent, and with whom? — Amidst the bright glories of heaven or the dark miseries of hell? — In thy Father’s house— at thy Savior’s side, and with all the saved from every land, and with all the holy angels who never sinned? or, awful thought — in the prison house of hell, with the devil and his angels, and all the impenitent wicked of every age? Oh! what an eternity of misery this must be! the very thought of it is overwhelming. Now, we may forget our sorrow, or even our misery, for a little while, in welcome sleep; but there will be no sleep in hell. Now, we may find a quiet corner and weep alone, and find relief in solitude; but no quiet, no solitude, no relief, will ever be found there. The eyes that are distressed at every sight shall never be closed — the ear that is assailed with blasphemies on every side, shall never grow dull of hearing —the weary soul shall never find one moment’s rest. All hope shall flee away, and dark despair shall complete its awful work.

But, enough, enough, I forbear. Bless God, the door of repentance and salvation is open - wide open — open for thee, my reader, yes, open for thyself. Wilt thou not turn to Jesus now? Wilt thou not flee to Him now, while thy sad case is before thee, and while all the solemn realities of the future are pressing on thy mind? Yes, do, we beseech thee. Stay not till thou hast finished this paper. As thou art, where thou art, lift up thy heart to Jesus. “Come unto me.....I will give you rest,” are His own words of tenderest love and richest grace. “Him that cometh to me,” He says, “I will in no wise cast out.” Thou canst never be more fit to come, or more welcome to thy Savior than now; and never more welcome to thy Father’s arms, thy Father’s house, thy Father’s sweetest welcome there. His joy and delight in receiving the prodigal, is a thousand times greater than the prodigal’s in being received. What wondrous grace and love! What wondrous long-suffering and mercy! His name alone have all the praise!

It is difficult — more than difficult, for either writer or preacher, fully to realize the force of these two words, “saved — lost.” All that is solemn, weighty, important —all that is blessed or miserable, both for time and eternity, to the immortal soul, is included in these words. Were every reader of

these pages, and every hearer of the gospel, to be described according to truth, these two words would suffice for all. There is no third class — no middle ground in scripture. Hence we read, that “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Those who believe in Him are saved, those who believe not are lost. Not finally, or everlastingly lost, of course, while here; but lost under the guilt and condemnation of sin, and too commonly, alas, lost to all proper sense of the consequences of sin. As one has forcibly said, “Young, brave, polite, intelligent, but lost! Beautiful, amiable, honored, beloved, but lost! Wealthy, idolized, caressed, flattered, but lost! Serious, courteous, moral, affectionate, but lost! Discreet, benevolent, educated, a churchgoer, but lost!”

Remember then, O my reader, that although every qualification and advantage here mentioned, most truthfully applied to thee, thou art still lost, if not a believer in Christ Jesus. Nothing short of His blood can cleanse thy sins away. We are saved through faith in the blood of Christ, which cleanseth us from all sin. Saved! yes, saved — saved with God’s great salvation! All blessing is included in the one word saved. Eternal life, pardon, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, adoption into God’s family, acceptance in the Beloved, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, standing in grace, waiting for glory.

May this wealthy portion be thine, dear reader — and the wealthy portion of all who read these pages! Amen.

Stability and Peace

“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”

Here lies the true secret of stability and peace, at all times, and under all circumstances. The authority of God for the ground we occupy, and His presence with us thereon — the word of the Lord, as the warrant for what we are doing, and the light of His countenance in the doing of it. There is no possibility of getting on without these two things. It will not do merely to be able to give chapter and verse, as we say, for a certain position which we have taken up; we must realize the Lord’s own presence with us. And, on the other hand, it will not do to say we have the Lord’s presence with us, unless we can give a divine warrant — a “Thus saith the Lord” — for what we are doing, and for the path we are treading.

Joshua could never have faced the difficulties of his day, without these two things; and, although we may not have to meet the same things that lay in his path, yet, we may rest assured of this, we shall never get on, in this our day, without the word of God as our authority, and His presence as our strength. Our lot is cast in a moment of special confusion. A multitude of conflicting voices fall on the ear. Men are taking sides. We see apparently the best and holiest, the most devoted and intelligent men ranged on opposite sides of the same question, and pursuing opposite ways, though professing to follow the same Lord. What are we to think? What are we to do? What do we want? We want to hear, deep down in our very inmost soul, these two weighty and imperishable sentences, “Have not I commanded thee?” — “Lo, I am with thee.” These are grand realities, which the very feeblest and most unlettered saint may enjoy, and without which none can possibly make head against the tide of evil at present rising around us.

Never, perhaps, in the annals of Christianity, was there a moment which more imperatively demanded the most direct personal dealing of the soul with God and His truth. It will not do for anyone to pin his faith to the sleeve of another. God is testing souls in a very remarkable manner. The sieve is doing its solemn work in the midst of the Church. No doubt, those who are enabled to go through the sifting and testing, with God, will reap a rich harvest of blessing; but we must go through it. It is being made manifest, just now, in a very special way, whose faith is standing merely in the wisdom of men, and whose in the power of God. All that is hollow is being exposed, and will be so more and more; but God will keep those whose hearts are true to the name of Jesus. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.”

This is the soul’s unfailing refuge, at all times. It was to this the apostle Paul directed the elders of Ephesus, at the close of his touching and pathetic address, in Acts 20 “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace.” He does not commend them to any order of men; not even to apostles or their successors; to general councils or their decrees; to fathers or their traditions; to doctors or their dogmas. Ah! no; none of these would avail in the presence of the “grievous wolves” which were about to enter in among them, and amid the “perverse things” which

some from among themselves! would give utterance to. Nothing but God Himself and the word of His grace could stand, in an evil day, or enable a soul to stand.

There is something perfectly beautiful in the jealous care of the apostle Paul lest any should lean upon him, or upon anything save the living God Himself. Harken to the following glowing passage, "For this cause also 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." (1 Thess. 2:13.) That devoted, single-hearted workman only sought to connect souls with God by means of His word. This is the object of all true ministry. Where the ministry is not true, not of God, it will connect souls with itself; and, in that case human influence will be brought to bear — weight of character — education — mental power — wealth — position — a thousand things, in short, which are all used to form a foundation for the soul's confidence and shut it out from God. Thus the faith of the soul is made to rest in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God.

Christian reader, we want you to ponder this matter deeply. Be assured it demands your serious attention. See that your soul is resting on the deep and solid foundation of God's word - that you have His direct and positive authority for where you are and what you are doing. And then see also that you have His presence with you. These two things will impart sweet peace to your spirit, and holy stability to your path, come what may. "Have not I commanded thee?" — "Lo, I am with thee." It is your happy privilege to know the reality of these things, just as fully and just as distinctly in your day, as did Joshua in his day, Jeremiah in his day, and the apostles in their day. The measure of apprehension may vary — the circumstances may differ; but the ground or principle is the same always. Do not, therefore, we entreat of you, be satisfied with anything less than God's authority and God's presence. Be not troubled or perplexed about the conflicting opinions of men. You must expect these. They are nothing new. But remember that, far above all the din and confusion, the strife and controversy, the opposition of sects and parties - far above all these things, in the clear light of the divine presence, in the calmness of the inner sanctuary, faith can hear with distinctness those precious, soul-sustaining accents, "Have not I commanded thee?" — "Lo, I am with thee."

These things can never fail, they are imperishable. See that you possess them, just now. Be able, in the calm dignity of a faith that rests only in the power and on the authority of God, to give a reason for the path that you tread, the work you do, the niche you fill. This is not high-mindedness or haughtiness, dogmatism or pride, self-confidence or vain-glory. It is the very reverse. It is self-abnegation and confidence in God. "With the lowly is wisdom." Precious truth! May we all remember it! It is the lowly mind that really possesses heavenly wisdom. It is not the learned, the astute, the long-headed, or clearheaded among men that can thread their way through the labyrinths of the present moment; no, it is the lowly, the simple, the self-distrusting, the childlike, the unpretending. These are they who will have wisdom to guide them, in darkest times — these are they who will possess peace in their souls and stability in their ways. May God's Spirit lead us into these things!

The Sword of the Spirit

Caesar Malan, when traveling, on one occasion, in France, met an infidel, with whom he entered into conversation, and in the course of his remarks, he quoted various passages of holy scripture. The infidel told him it was of no use his quoting from that book to him, inasmuch as he did not believe one word of it; that he should first establish its authenticity.

Malan replied, "Suppose I were to plunge a sword into your body, there would surely be no need of any logical proof that it was a sword; it would prove itself by its effect upon your person." He then proceeded with the conversation, still quoting from the word of God.

They parted; but the truth of God did its own work. It entered, as the sword of the Spirit, into the heart of the infidel, and cut its way through his infidel system, showing it to be a mass of folly and himself to be a guilty, hell-deserving sinner. Time rolled on, and after many years, Caesar Malan was accosted, in the streets of Paris, by a gentleman who asked him if he remembered having met him in the diligence. He then told him that the word of God had, in very deed, proved itself, in his case, to be the sword of the Spirit, and he now needed no logical proof.

Christian reader, do we not want to quote scripture more after this fashion, with a deep and earnest faith in its divine power, with a full assurance that it is nothing less than the "sword of the Spirit?" Too often alas! we use it as our sword, and instead of doing good, we do mischief.

Take Him at His Word

“I’ll take Him at His word.” Such was the expressive utterance of one recently brought to rest for his salvation on the finished work of Christ. For many years a professor, he knew not that he was not a possessor of eternal life. Many a word of admonition had been given him, but they all failed to reach his conscience, and to show him his condition before God, till the Holy Ghost began a most special work in his neighborhood. That the open, profligate, and careless sinner should be arrested and converted was, to him, nothing strange. How could they be in heaven unless they mended their ways on earth. Between them and him there was a great difference. They had never professed to be Christians, he had; and his profession was of a recent date. But when some, whom even he believed were as good livers as himself, as respectable, as moral, and as outwardly religious, were converted, and owned that now they had found something they had not before, and had experienced a change hitherto to them unknown, his conscience was roused, and he felt constrained to examine the ground on which he was standing for acceptance before God.

The eye being opened by the Spirit of God to see the truth, he was brought to the conclusion that he had been all this time only a professor of Christianity, without possessing life in a risen Saviour. This brought him to seek after the chief concern of a fallen, ruined creature—salvation. Nor was he alone in this: his wife and son were also aroused and concerned for their salvation. So, one day, three people might have been seen wending their way to a person in the immediate neighborhood to ask of her to direct them aright. What a sight it must have been — a family together concerned and alive for the interests of their souls — father, mother, and son together asking what they must do to be saved!

The way of salvation was set before them; the finished work of Christ was held up, as that with which God would have sinners to be satisfied, and on which He would have them believe and rest. As the truth was thus declared, and God’s plan of grace unfolded, light dawned on the once mere professor of Christianity; and now, with an intensity of earnestness, stimulated by the real sense of his soul’s need, the old man exclaimed, “I’ll tak Him at His word;” “I’ll tak Him at His word.” Then turning to his son, who seemed slower in apprehending the truth, this new convert to Christ became a preacher of that grace he had hitherto neglected: “Robin, man,” he said, “tak Him at His word!”

Simple indeed are these words, but how full of meaning. This is just what God would have the sinner do. Not simply believe He speaks the truth — how many do that, and never beyond it — but believe what He says and act on it. This is faith indeed. Abraham, the father of those justified by faith, learned this lesson, and acted on it: when led abroad that night by God Almighty he looked at the stars shining in the sky, and learned from the countless number that met his eye how numerous would be the seed that should own him as their common ancestor; and we read, “He believed God, and that was counted to him for righteousness.” His body he had already come to regard as dead, but the word of God was enough - he rested on it. The jailor at Philippi took God at His word. The earnest, heart-stirring cry, “What must I do to be saved?” receive an answer which

he acted on, and found peace and joy before the morning. Nor he only. What met his need was suited for all in his house, likewise; and acting on it, they too, by God's grace, believed the word, and were with him baptized. This is God's way of justification and salvation. How little is it understood, and still less acted upon!

But we would ask whether this principle of taking God at His word has no teaching for saints — believers on the Lord Jesus Christ? Is it only the unconverted who need to have this impressed on them? Have not God's children constant need of being reminded of this likewise? For it is the principle on which they are called to walk, just as much as it is the principle on which the sinner is justified. Do all the readers of "Things New and Old" know that rest of heart which, under all circumstances, keeps its possessor calm and self-possessed? Are all ready at all times to go forth on their way resting simply on God's word? Have they never known any season of doubt and even despondency? Are there no occasions when in their christian course unbelief has for a time got the upper hand, and calm confidence in God's guidance and provision is exchanged for deep anxiety and gloom? And whence springs all this? The heart knows, and God knows. It has not taken Him at His word: when it does, if circumstances call for it, it can become a giant in the walk of faith; when it does not, who can say to what extent of feebleness and vacillation it may descend — becoming the sport of these very circumstances over which it should have the complete mastery. Have we not scripture teaching for the walk by faith, as well as for salvation by faith? If believers are to be pilgrims and strangers here, has not God provided fully for them every step of their way? So Peter, who tells us we are to be pilgrims, tells us where to unburden ourselves of the cares we may be troubled with by the way: "Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you." (1 Pet. 5:7.) His epistle warns us plainly that suffering for Christ is what we must expect, and it tells us very simply how to act. It is a real thing, and God would have us prove it to the utmost that He cares for us. And what a truth is this for the pilgrim to embrace as a reality — "He careth." It is His habit, so to speak. Not only He has cared for us, the gift of His Son shows that; but He careth, continues to care, for us.

Those who are redeemed by that precious blood should understand that, if they are God's children, He is in very deed their Father. And as His people of old found their wants provided, their way directed, their order of march regulated, and everything connected with their welfare arranged by Jehovah, so surely He, who did that, will do all His children require. They have to do with Him, and He will do all for them.

Peter knew something of this principle when, with Andrew his brother, at the word of Jesus, "Follow me," they straightway forsook their nets and followed Him. James and John, too, showed what it was to walk by faith when, hearing the same words addressed to themselves, they "left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after him." (Mark 1:18-20.) At that summons their only means of livelihood was given up, and they followed Christ. Again, on another occasion, Peter takes Him at His word, when, having toiled all night and catching nothing, he says, "At thy word I will let down the net;" and then finds that, if he has forsaken his earthly calling to follow Christ, it is to go after Him who has all creation at His beck and call, and therefore who could and would provide for His own. But when meditating on this act of theirs we must remember it was at His word. If He gives the call to be wholly occupied in His service He will assuredly provide.

Paul knew what it was to take God at His word when placed in circumstances of the greatest danger. All thought of saving the ship and the 270 souls in it was lost, the tempest continued, the heavens were obscured, and had been for many days, and all known expedients to lighten the ship, with the hope of her riding out the storm, had been resorted to; and when nothing more could be done Paul stood forth, and exhorted all to be of good cheer. But how could they — how could he be of good cheer? The secret comes out: God's angel had stood by him that night, and assured him of the deliverance of all on hoard with himself. "Wherefore," said he, "be of good cheer, for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." The storm had not abated, the heavenly bodies were still veiled from view, but God's word had been passed and Paul was confident. Another instance is found in the history of the nobleman of Cana, whose son was sick. Being at the point of death the anxiety of the father is great, and he says to the Lord, "Sir, come down ere my child die." The Lord does not accede to his request. He did not go with him to the house, nor did He send an apostle in His stead. But, turning to the father, He says, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." Can that be true? some might have said. Are you sure of it? others might have exclaimed. Do not deceive me! might have passed the lips of many in a similar situation. But the nobleman says nothing. He believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him, and acting on it went his way — and it was true. From that hour the fever left the child and himself believed and his whole house.

What lessons are these examples to us of simply taking God at His word. If we turn from these instances of the power of faith to the practice of it among believers at the present day, must we not admit that there is often a sad falling off. With all our light and instruction have not many of us much to learn of this unhesitating obedience to, and real confidence in, God's word? Our circumstances will not be identical with those alluded to above, but they may be somewhat similar. Are we prepared to act as they did? The strength in which they acted is for us as well as for them; the word for our guidance may be as plain to us as to them. It is true we look not for now, we cannot have now, the Lord personally present on earth as then. But we have His word. It was that they believed and acted in accordance with. It is that God would have us believe and follow. Let us remember His word. Not our thoughts about it, not our feelings, not our fancies, not the glosses on it of others, however excellent they may have been in themselves; but His plain, simple word. How many difficulties will be cleared up if we keep this in mind. It is His word we are to hear and obey. How many apparent insuperable mountains will become plains, for

"Faith laughs at impossibilities,

And says, It shall be done."

The Two Journeys

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “With blind-folded eyes,
Down a wild torrent, under stormy skies,
A gulf between two dark eternities,
Drifting, we know not where!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “To a land of light,
A home of loveliness, serene, and bright,
Joyfully hastening with steady flight,
Our hearts before us there!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Life’s short pleasures past,
Hope’s funeral knell sounding on every blast,
Heaven’s entrance closed, to ruin hurried fast,
A leaf before the wind!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Pilgrims near their home.
No longer in a foreign land to roam;
Bright and below’d ones waiting till we come,
All sorrow left behind!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Who the path can say
To where some star will lend a cheering ray?
Or through earth’s labyrinth direct our way,
So wildly sought in vain!

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Christ, the Risen One,
Through life and death, hath now to glory gone,
He sends His messengers to lead us on,
The way is broad and plain!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Terrible reply
From your white throne of judgment in the sky:

“Depart, accursed! from My presence fly

“Forever! — Awful word!”

“Whither, oh! whither?” — “Washed from earthly stain,

No more to wander or to fall again:

Forever with the Father to remain,

Forever with the Lord!”

The Two Reproaches

“Thy voice made rocks thy fountains; ocean waves
A wall around thy chosen; desert caves
Their temples; flames their car of victory.
Thy touch made lepers pure as infancy.
Thy word lulls storms to sleep, like babes at play;
Or, as they rage, bids them white chrisoms lay
For flowers. Thy smile makes tears of sinful men
The joy of angels. Shall we wonder, then,
That blinded hate, and envy masked in scorn,
Twining for thee the crown of sharpest thorn,
But wove a wreath of glory for thy brow;
And broken hearts, which sins and sorrows bow,
Scanning through all the heaven of thy word
Some special guiding-star of hope to see;
And angels, searching tributes for their Lord,
Finding these words of those that hated thee,
‘This man receiveth sinners,’ and again —
Written in blood earth’s darkest record o’er —
‘He saved others,’ pause and search no more; —
Both finding all they sought, gaze and adore.”

Two Seas

Dark rolls the tide of human woe, a troubled, restless sea,
And evermore there yawns below the gulf of misery;
O'er whose abyss of ills and fears, too dire, too vague, to name,
There heaves the ocean-swell of tears, disaster, sin, and shame.
Its arctic regions of despair gleam loftily in pride;
And full-sail'd vessels founder there, or ice-bound must abide.
Erst gaily launch'd, the colors float with music on the breeze,
But hands unseen grasp every boat, there's danger on the seas!
Where you far-reaching breakers foam, a thousand ships are toss'd,
The death-knell sounds with ceaseless moan, ship after ship is lost!
Or by the Maelstrom's giddy whirl, unthinkingly betray'd —
Small barks go down; the waters curl above their hapless grave.
Beguiled by distant tropic clime, fair crafts becalmed lie;
Or heavy-laden for a time, to golden marts they hit.
Ah, woe is me the dismal end no tongue hath power to tell,
The port where crew and captain tend is an eternal hell!
O mariners! what harm and loss on those deceitful waves!
Yet see — the lode-star of the cross shines still, and shining saves!
It watcheth you from yonder skies, it hath a potent spell;
Look up! oh, fix thereon your eyes, that star will guide you well!
It pointeth where still waters flow, God's ocean-tide of love!
Would ye to His fair haven go? His mercy-waves above?
The star — the star declares the way — soft shining through the night,
It leadeth all who heed its ray to blissful realms of light.
Dark rolls the tide of human woe, God's ocean shineth fair;
Its depths the angels fain would know, my sins are buried there!

A sea of peace, and not of tears, of glory, not of shame.

O mariners! farewell to fears, once launch'd in Jesus' name!

H. K. B.

Wisdom's Children: Who Are They?

There is one feature which marks the children of Wisdom, and that is, they always justify her. So our blessed Lord tells us, in the seventh chapter of Luke. "But wisdom is justified of all her children." (Ver. 35.) In the same chapter we are told that "all the people that heard Jesus, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Ver. 29, 30.

From all this we learn a very simple but a most precious truth, namely, that all the children of wisdom justify God and condemn themselves. This is the true ground for any sinner. Abel stood on this ground, when he "offered unto God the more excellent sacrifice." Noah occupied it, when he "prepared an ark to the saving of his house." It was there Job was standing, when he exclaimed, "Behold I am vile." "Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." That was Isaiah's ground when he cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips." It was Peter's position when he said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me" to enumerate all the children of wisdom — all the members of that highly favored generation who have freely and fully accepted the counsel of God against themselves, and confessed themselves to be poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinners — who have been led to say, with David, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Psalm 2:4, 5; Rom. 3:4.

This is the invariable language of Wisdom's children. They always condemn themselves and justify God. They do not make excuses for themselves, they do not seek to cloak or to palliate. No; "I will confess" is the first grand utterance of every true child of Wisdom; and until this language comes forth from the heart, there can be nothing right — until the soul is really on this ground, there is an insuperable barrier between it and God. So David found it in his day, for he tells us, "when I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

Thus it must ever be. There can be no comfort, no relief, no blessing, no sense of pardon, no peace, no holy communion with God, until the flood-gates of the heart are opened, and free vent given to the spirit of true repentance.

And what then? How does God deal with those who justify Him and condemn themselves? All praise to His Name! He justifies them and condemns their sin. Marvelous grace! The very moment I take my place as a self-condemned sinner, God leads me into the place of a justified saint. Self-condemnation is the sure precursor of divine justification. I have only to declare myself guilty, and leave all the rest to God. Wisdom's children justify God, and He justifies them — they condemn themselves, and He pardons them. How can this be? The cross is the answer. There God condemned sin. There His righteous wrath against sin was poured out upon the sin-bearer, in

order that His righteousness might be imputed to the sinner that simply believes in Jesus.

Here it is that Wisdom's children take their stand. This is their blessed resting place — the solid and eternal groundwork of their peace.

Reader, say, are you one of Wisdom's children? Have you been led to see your guilt and own it before God? Have you accepted the counsel of God against yourself? Have you justified God and condemned yourself? If so, you may, this very moment, find repose in the finished work of Christ, and in the righteousness of God founded thereon. Such is the blessed portion of all the children of Wisdom.

Yet There Is Room

“Yet there is room! room in His house to fill,
Though countless hosts appear;
See, at His table vacant places still,
Oh! waiting guests, draw near!
Forsake your vain and fading pleasures,
And take His offered, boundless treasures:
Yet there is room!
Yet there is room! The many ransomed there
Suffice not for His love;
He longs that everyone His grace would share,
His saving mercy prove;
For still He stands with sinners pleading,
His voice in heaven still interceding.
Yet there is room!
Yet there is room! Oh sinner, pause again,
Think of this call once more;
Or is your heart so closed, that Christ in vain
Stands knocking at the door?
All His long-offered love discarded,
Himself a stranger disregarded,
Who finds no room?
Yet there is room, Oh shame, to feel no need,
No hungering after good,
Content upon these empty husks to feed,
So near to heavenly food!
Food, offered still, if you accept it;

But know, for those who will reject it,
There is no room!
Yet there is room! Oh sinner, hear it still,
And then the words repeat! —
Come, feeble, weak, despairing if you will,
Come to the Saviour's feet.
Say, 'Jesus, give! in full surrender,
I come my worthless heart to tender —
An empty room.'
Yet there is room! When earth can give no more
A dwelling to her guest,
Thank God! the Christian sees a brighter shore,
A home of endless rest. It is enough, when death is nearing,
This blest assurance to be hearing,
Yet there is room!
Yet there is room! a heavenly dwelling-place,
How infinitely wide! There rests the soul, beholding Jesus' face,
And it is satisfied.
The flock who follow Him through sadness,
Are gathering there in holy gladness,
Yet there is room!"
"Hymns from the Land of Luther."

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