

# WRITINGS OF J L HARRIS

by J.L. Harris

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by J.L. Harris, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

25 Chapters

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## **01.00. Jewish Bondage**

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## 01.01. No more Conscience of Sins

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No more Conscience of Sins.

Heb 10:2. The grace in which we stand is, that we are sons of God, and priests to God. The true worshippers, as we are taught by our Lord in the fourth chapter of St. John, are those who in the spirit of sonship worship the Father. But there is another relation, besides that of sons, in which we stand to God — an official relation as being his constituted worshippers; taking up the place which Israel once occupied as the only worshipping people in the whole earth, but after an entirely different order. We could not indeed be priests unto God unless we were sons. To be sons of God is our real proper dignity, because we have thereby relationship with God in the highest sense; but this does not hinder our having an official standing before him; and it is this which we would now consider. The common standing of all saints is to be once purged worshippers before God. The peculiar privilege of Israel was nearness unto God: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Exo 19:4.) This placed Israel, comparatively with all the nations around them, in a priestly standing before God. Hence it is said, "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off [the Gentiles], and to them that were nigh." (Eph 2:17.) In the time of Israel's declension, when they had become as the nations around them, both in their government and their worship, instead of standing in their original separateness, — the Lord says to them, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." (Hos 4:6.) The grace of God had brought Israel unto himself, having led them all the way from Egypt to Sinai. But there they undertook to stand on their own obedience and, on condition of doing so, were to be unto God "a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." (Exo 19:5-6.) They, however, failed immediately in obedience and although relatively, as a nation, they still had nearness to God yet immediately on their failure under the law, a certain number are taken from among the nation to stand in peculiar nearness to God, and the people themselves were consequently thrown at a distance. Thus it was ordered of the Lord unto Moses: "And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children, of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons." (Exo 28:1.) They were to "come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place." (Exo 28:43) It was the privilege of one only to come nearer still, and that was the high priest, to go within the veil. But after the sin of Nadab and Abihu, this privilege was curtailed so far as the frequency of entering it was concerned. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died and the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark." To Israel indeed pertained the service of God (worship), but it was a worship of relative nearness to God. The high priest the nearest, the priests next — these were inside worshippers; the Levites next to them — they were attendants on the priests, and employed about the tabernacle; and then the people, who were outside worshippers, as it is said, "the whole multitude of the people were

praying without at the time of incense." (Luk 1:10.) But even there, even in the outer court, no Gentile could approach. (Acts 21:28.)

Sacrifice and priesthood are essential prerequisites to worship. How fully was this taught to Jews under the law. They were habitually reminded that there was no acceptable worship but on the ground of the accepted sacrifice; and that they needed the intervention of the priest authoritatively to pronounce them cleansed for worship. Hence a Jew under the law rightly connected justification with worship. He could not worship, because guilt attached to him which needed the expiation, or uncleanness which needed the intervention of the priest. The great act, however, which put Israel in the place of a worshipping people, was the sacrifice of the great day of atonement. This was an annual solemnity. "On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. This shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year." (Lev 16:30; Lev 16:34.) Israel then stood on that day as the worshipping people of the Lord. But they stood not with a purged conscience. That was what their sacrifices never could give; for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. It required other blood to do that, the blood of him who is presented to us in the epistle to the Hebrews as the Son. But here comes in the great contrast between worship then and now. We need sacrifice and priesthood in order to worship as much as Israel of old; but though worshipping thus on the same ground as they, our worship is of an entirely different order. I say different in its order, as well as essentially different in the dignity both of the sacrifice and the priest. Of this most important contrast between the worship of Israel under the law, and that of the Church now, we are not left to conjecture or inference. Blessed for us, we have the comment of the Holy Ghost in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, on the remarkable solemnity of the great day of atonement, given for the express purpose of showing that the standing of the true worshipper now is the very reverse of that of Israel under the law. Let us meditate awhile on it.

First, the sacrifices offered under the law never could put those who came to them in the place of constant worshippers (for so "perfect" clearly means in this passage); and this not only because of their intrinsic inefficiency, but also because of their repetition; for had they effected this, they need not be yearly offered, "because the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins." Now mark, to be perfected as a worshipper is to have no more conscience of sins. This is, according to the aspect in which we are now considering worship, to be a true worshipper. Surely this exalts worship very highly. Because thus it is not in any wise the means of our justification, but that for which we are already justified. And how blessedly does the apostle show here, by way of contrast, that the comers unto Christ are made perfect: "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Israel were perfected for a moment on the day of atonement; but even then not "as pertaining to the conscience;" the blood of their sacrifice could not touch that. (Heb 9:9.) Their worship, therefore, must have been in "the spirit of bondage unto fear." (Rom 8:15.) There could have been no boldness (liberty), as we have by the blood of Jesus. (Heb 10:19.) The unceasing repetition of the sacrifice had only the effect of as unceasingly bringing sin to remembrance. But Christ, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God — not as one expecting to offer sacrifice again, but waiting for his enemies to be made his footstool. And to this we have to add the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost, in the special promise of the New Covenant — "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." And

therefore there needs no more sacrifice for sin. The one finished and accepted sacrifice of Christ is therefore of permanent efficacy. There is in it remission of sins to every one that believeth; and he that believeth has not to look for any further sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:17); for if he had, it would bring sin to remembrance, and charge the conscience with guilt. And this is always the case where there is not simple repose of soul on the one finished sacrifice of Christ. Faith sees that the one thing has been done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." And hence, the moment a Jew believed in "the precious blood of Christ," he was in a condition to assert that these were his privileges; as it is written, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1Pe 2:9.) Thus praise, the highest part of worship, can now be entered on: "I will extol thee, my God, O king, and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." (Psa 145:1-21)

While praise is silent for God in Zion, the mouth of the sinner, redeemed to God through the precious blood of the Lamb, is opened to show forth his praises. God himself has created the fruit of the lips, speaking peace to him that is far off, and to him that is nigh. But to return to our chapter. Liberty of conscience is the very essence of true worship. Not what men call liberty of conscience, but the ability to approach God without any sense of guilt upon the conscience. This, be it observed, is not presuming on innocence neither is it the profession of unconsciousness of sin — for if "I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified," — but it is the fullest consciousness of and acknowledgment of sin, with the profession (let us hold it fast) that it has been for ever put away by the one sacrifice of Christ offered once for all.

All the gifts and sacrifices offered by a worshipper under the law "could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." (Heb 9:9.) He might have approached God strictly according to the ritual prescribed, but it must have been a burdened conscience. No conscience can be at ease before God where any thing depends on what the person himself is doing or has to do. Yea, I would say, not if it had now to depend on what Christ has to do, instead of resting on that which he has already done. The worshipper must be once and for ever purged, or he must have conscience of sin. But only let him by faith follow Christ through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, by which he hath entered into the holy place: only let him see that it is "not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, that he hath entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption;" and where can be the conscience of sin? Christ has not to enter in again, he has no more sacrifice for sin to offer — no other blood to carry in; for where could any be found of like preciousness? All is done once, and once for all; hence the worshipper once purged, and purged by such blood (Heb 9:14), has no more conscience of sin. He can serve the living God. Nothing now depends on what the worshipper has to do; all hangs on the accomplished sacrifice, the precious blood and permanent priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. But again. When God had to do with Israel, even before he could speak to them to bring them under the covenant, the injunction to Moses was, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes: and Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God." (Exo 19:1-25) The

people must be sanctified in order to meet God, and sanctified in his own way; as God said when those came near to offer strange fire before him, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me." (Lev 10:3.) Who, after that dread example, would dare to approach God, if he was not sanctified in the way of God's appointment, so that God might be sanctified in him?

Now what do we learn concerning the true worshipper's sanctification now? What concerning God's appointment now for the once purged worshipper's approach to him? "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and offerings for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. . . . By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Thus it is by God's own ordinance that we are sanctified. God's own will in this matter has been done; and therefore are we able to meet him as once purged and sanctified worshippers, put in the place of the holy nation. Those alone who by faith rest in the one accepted, and never to be repeated, offering of the body of Jesus Christ, are constituted God's worshipping people. This unchangeable place of blessing is given them by the express will of God.

Once more to look at the priest. How busy was Aaron! He had not only the yearly sacrifices on the great day of atonement, but he had likewise much to do even daily, that the constituted worshippers might engage in worship. He had the morning and evening sacrifices, besides those which were occasional. He might be called on at any time to offer a trespass-offering, so that he never could have sat down as one who had finished his work, and could look on it with satisfaction. But what a blessed contrast is here. "Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." This is the position of one who had finished his work, and could look on it with satisfaction, and could present it before God continually. Not like Aaron, expecting to be called on to offer another sacrifice; but, that having been done once for all, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool: for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Lastly. The new covenant not only promises the same high privileges as the old, but it secures the attainment of them by the grace of God, when it had been proved they could not be attained by the obedience of the people. "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation." This was the tenor of the old covenant — its promises being conditional on their obedience. But "the better covenant," based upon "better promises," speaks thus: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." Here all is done by God himself — and therefore the promises necessarily follow — they become a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. And there is added to that above, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Thus, therefore, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the truth, that "by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;" because, "where remission of sin is, there is no more offering for sin."

What amazing knowledge immediately results from the recognition of the one completed sacrifice of Christ; the dignity of his person giving to it its amazing value. Our blessed standing is as a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, privileged in this, to the exclusion of all others, to be the worshipping people of God on the earth. The place in which God by his own will, Christ by his own work, and the Holy Ghost by his distinct testimony, have set us, is that of worshippers once and for ever purged. Without any conscience of sin; able to approach the very God who can read our hearts without any suspicious fear, lest any thing of guilt should yet be found on us, — any charge of sin not thoroughly purged away. "Blessed indeed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Could an Israelite, coming to God according to the law, be without guile before him? I judge not. Lurking suspicion that God saw in him deeper sin than his offering could atone for, or that he himself might have neglected some prescribed duty, would make him anything but guileless. One, indeed, who came to God by faith, not in the ordered place, but under a fig-tree, might be found in holy confidence with God — an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile. Such was Nathanael, under the divine teaching, immediately recognizing Jesus as Son of God and King of Israel. Surely he is a sample of Israel by and by, under the covenant, taking the place of nearness to God, as a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, by their recognition of Jesus as the Son — the sacrifice and the priest. The worshipper once purged is a guileless worshipper. Be it known as our portion now, as it will be in glory. Amen.

## 01.02. The New and Living Way

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The New and Living Way.

Heb 10:20. In the former paper we have found that all believers in Jesus are constituted perpetual worshippers, by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. We have now to consider the sphere of their worship. In Israel, under the law, the high priest being nearer to God than the priests, the priests nearer than the Levites, and the Levites nearer than the people, the sphere of worship was the tabernacle on the earth. But now, not only is all this relative nearness to God done away with, but the once-purged worshippers are introduced into "the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," because it is there that Jesus now ministereth. (Heb 8:2.)

Consequently the pattern of our worship, and of the sphere of it, is not found in the people's worship under the law, but in the priest's service. (Heb 8:4-5.) We have properly no people's worship — all is priestly now. Even in the holy city itself, we have prophetically presented to us the outer court, where the people worshipped as cast out — those alone being owned by God who worshipped as priests in the holy or heavenly places. (Heb 11:2.) We are, indeed, a peculiar people — God's own special treasure; and our privilege as such is, that we worship not in the distance of the people, but in the nearness of the priests; not in the outer court, but in the temple itself.

We know, indeed, that there are in the church those who teach, and those who are taught — those who minister, and those ministered unto — those who rule, and those who obey — those who feed, and those who are fed; all this is most true, but this does not in the least degree interfere with the blessing, common to one as well as the other, that they are priests unto God. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." (Rev 1:6.)

"Ye are a royal priesthood." (1Pe 2:9.) The apostle Paul was a priest unto God, but not more so than any of the individuals he salutes in his epistles, or than the most uninstructed believer in the whole church. The diversities among the members, formed by the diverse gifts of the Spirit, must be carefully distinguished from their priestly equality. Our worship, then, is priestly worship, and consequently the heavenly courts are its sphere. The fearful warning given by the apostle, which at one time or another has made every awakened soul tremble (Heb 10:28-29), is a warning against the fatal consequences of turning back to the old order of worship, as if it were to be a pattern of our worship, instead of the contrast unto it. To return, therefore, to the order of worship under the law, is to reject the heavenly order for a copy of the earthly. It marks the apostacy of worship. And is not this the peculiar mark of the professing church? It has followed the old pattern of the law, instead of the heavenly pattern. It has made again the difference in its priests and people, — a distinction unknown to the New Testament. Thus has the professing church put its priests in a place of comparative nearness to God, and the people at a distance. And what is this but to trample under foot the Son of God? As if, after all that he has suffered and done, we were at as great a distance as before; and as if with his priestly ministration, we still needed the

intervention of others in our approaches to God? God has cast out the outer court, and will not regard worship offered therein; but men have profanely sought to sanctify it, and in so doing have trodden under foot the Son of God. We have already noticed the command given to Moses, to sanctify the people to meet God, and also that we, by the will of God, are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; but this return to the old form is characterized by the Apostle as accounting the blood of the covenant wherewith we have been sanctified as an unholy thing, — as that which would still keep us without, instead of that which entitles us to enter into the holiest of all. And what an insult to the Spirit of grace, who witnesses to the soul of the wondrous grace of God and of Christ, and who is himself in the once-purged worshipper the power of nearness of worship: for God is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit. What an insult to that blessed Spirit to put ourselves back to the distance in which the flesh must ever stand before God. Hence, therefore, this solemn warning, Take heed lest, after having received the knowledge of the truth with respect to your priestly standing and nearness to God, ye wilfully sin. For to worship God as we think fit is the very essence of wilfulness. God leaves nothing to our choice in the matter of worship; it is not allowed us to choose whether we will go back to the old pattern. God has set it aside, and to return to it is to choose the place of judgment. For nothing can await the outside worshippers but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin to bring you nearer, or to make you accepted. Jesus is not waiting to offer that; for he has done it once for all, but waiting till his enemies be made his footstool. But even the priest's service in the holy place, near as it was, is but partially the pattern of the service of the saints now. For now all relative nearness is done away with, and we must take the sphere of the ministry of the high priest himself to complete the pattern of our standing now.

While the first tabernacle was standing, the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; i.e., laid open. (Heb 9:8.) The priests, though able always to enter into the holy place, could proceed no further. The beautiful veil concealed from their eye the most holy place. The veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen, with its cunning work of cherubims, all open to their view, might indeed tell them of the glories concealed behind it; but the golden altar, the ark of the covenant overlaid with gold, with the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant, were all concealed from their sight. The immediate presence of him who dwelt between the cherubims on the mercy-seat was inaccessible by them. That was accessible to the high priest alone, and to him but once a year, and then not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. Mark: the high priest could not enter into the holiest of all at all times, as the priests could into the holy place; he could not enter there as a once purged worshipper, for he went there on the very ground of sin not being put away for ever. But now all is laid open. By the blood of Christ the way is opened into the holiest of all. How significantly was this marked by the veil of the temple being rent in twain when Jesus hung upon the cross. Yea, Jesus himself is the way, the living way. If there be a veil, he is that veil; not to conceal anything of God behind it, but to bring out all that may be known of God to view. And here the worshippers once purged have constant liberty to enter.

"Having, therefore, brethren." The Apostle does not take the stand of one in pre-eminent nearness himself to God, inviting others to draw nigh, as though he had been the priest and they the people — he on the inside and they without; but he classes himself with those whom he addresses,

calling them brethren, and three times repeating, "Let us." How different this to the order of old. Moses alone was to come near, and others were to worship afar off; but now it was equal nearness, equal liberty of access into the holiest of all.

What has the blood of Jesus left unaccomplished? In the shedding of it we have remission of sins. By the sprinkling of it we are pronounced clean, and sanctified as worshippers. It is ever on the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; for by it Christ hath entered in, having obtained eternal redemption. His thus entering in is not an annual solemnity, nor one ever to be repeated. The blood of the sin-offering was carried within the veil by Aaron on the great day of atonement, that he might "make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins." (Lev 16:16) This has now been done once and for ever. The atonement for the holy place is unto continuance — it is as much once and for ever purged as is the worshipper himself. Yea, no worshipper entering there need fear lest he should bring defilement there, because that blood that cleanseth all sin away is there for ever before God. Why are we so distant in our hearts from God? Is it not because we have so little sense of the real power of the blood within the veil, as the gracious provision of God himself for our holy and unhindered communion with him? "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." But mark the way of access. At Mount Sinai all was distance. "Thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourself, that ye go not up into the mount, nor touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death." (Exo 19:1-25) This distance ever characterized the worship under the law; there were constant bounds set, to pass which would have been death. Even Aaron himself could not pass the bounds of the veil at all times, "lest he die." The outside worshipping Israelite could not pass the bounds of the curtains which hung at the door of the tabernacle, "lest he die." To see God and live was impossible under the law; but now Jesus is the way, the living way, into God's presence. To see him is to see God, and live. He is not the barrier between us and God, but the way to God. All the distance, and every bound, is done away by Jesus. Did an Israelite on the outside gaze on the beautiful curtain, and long to pass it — but death would have been his portion had he attempted it — let him look to Jesus, who says, "I am the door: by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Yes, the death of Jesus is become to us the living way into the holiest of all. But if, having proceeded within the curtains of the door, the veil seemed to forbid further entrance, let him again look to Jesus, and the veil, says the apostle, is his flesh. The very God with whom we have to do is thus brought before us as full of grace and truth. And if he perceived it rent, again let him look to Jesus and him crucified, and the holiness of God invited instead of forbade an entrance. What words of blessing to the once purged worshipper! — "By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." But farther. Not only the work of Jesus and his character inspire confidence, but he himself is the High Priest over the house of God. His ministry is never for a moment interrupted. He is in the holiest of all, on the very ground of atonement having been made both for the people and the place, and therefore the present is to us one continued season of worship. How needful is this promise to give us confidence in entering into the holiest! The High Priest has not to go into the house; he is there constantly, and has taken a place which Aaron never could take in the tabernacle; he is over the house as his own; he is master of it; he openeth, and no man shutteth.

It is literally a great Priest over the house of God, or "great High Priest," as we have it in the fourth chapter. The worshippers themselves now enter into the privileged place of the High Priest, themselves taking the standing of high priests in this respect, not simply of priests entering into the holy place. Hence they need a great Priest — one who is over the house, even over them. (Heb 3:6.) This must not be forgotten. We are not priests in our own right, neither are we free of the house in our own right — all hangs on the great Priest; and our entrance into the holiest of all, now by faith, and in due time actually, is that which declares to us how much we are debtors to his grace. May we indeed, by these meditations, find fresh virtue in the blood of Jesus, and learn what its preciousness must be before God, when it can give us liberty to enter into the holiest of all! And now pause for a moment to contemplate what has been done for us, what has been done for every one whose eye has been turned away from the things which are visible, and with which he himself is conversant, to see Jesus, now hidden in the heavens from the sight of the world, but revealed to faith as at the right hand of the throne of the majesty of heaven. The worshippers have been once and for ever purged by His sacrifice once offered. By the will of God they have been sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. A living way has been opened for them through the blood of Jesus into the holiest of all. The place of worship is as much prepared for them to worship in by the blood, as they by the same blood are prepared to worship in it. The great Priest is abidingly in that place of worship; no ministration is wanting; He is the minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. He, too, is over the house; and its gates are always open — entrance is always to be had, all things are ready without our having done anything. What then remains but for us to use our high privileges, and to listen to the word — "Let us draw near:" but this, the Lord permitting, shall be the subject of the next paper. But is there not reason for deep humiliation on the part of Christians, who own assuredly the preciousness of the blood of Jesus for remission of sins, but who do not regard its preciousness as having purged the place of worship for those whose sins are forgiven? An Israelite was taught two things by the blood of the sacrifice. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." Many a soul which has been taught the value of the blood in the latter sense has never regarded it in the former. Many a Christian, who would be alarmed at anything which would imply that something was yet to be done by Jesus for justification, is quite unconscious of nullifying a most important part of the work of Jesus, that affecting worship, by the ritual to which he is subjected. The truth preached cheers his soul and leads into happy liberty — the ritual is submitted to as a point of decency, and in many instances tolerated only for the sake of the sermon. But what a fearful degradation of worship is this! What an undervaluing of the blood of Jesus! What a forgetfulness of our priestly place as worshippers once purged for the heavenly courts themselves The Lord pardon his saints for having so insulted his grace in the mode and character of their worship, and lead them by his Spirit into the only place of acceptable worship the holiest of all.

### 01.03. Let Us Draw Near

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Let Us Draw Near.

Heb 10:22.

It is indeed very blessed to be enabled to tell a poor awakened sinner, that in Jesus all things are ready which he needs for remission of sins, righteousness, and life. And it is not less blessed to be enabled to tell those who have so come to Jesus, that all things are ready for their worship in the holiest of all; that everything is there ordered by the blessed Jesus himself for their entrance therein, and that he himself has consecrated the way for their approach. The time is coming when "many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa 2:3.) But now is the time for believers to encourage one another to enter into the holiest of all — even into heaven itself, because Jesus is there. Come ye, say they, and let us draw near with a true heart.

Under the law, much of the priestly ministry was outside the tabernacle, and open to the view therefore of the worshipper. If he brought a burnt sacrifice, he was to bring it to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, where he was to kill it, and then the priests sprinkled the blood in his sight upon the altar that was by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. This part of the priest's work was visible to the outside worshippers. But he who could approach thus far was never satisfied as to his conscience. He came indeed to these sacrifices — he saw them offered; but they were utterly inefficacious as to the purging of the conscience. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." But now all on the outside has been once and for all accomplished; the priestly ministry is all within and invisible, and therefore only known to faith by the revelation of God.

Let us put ourselves in the place of a Hebrew worshipper, by God's grace taught to know Jesus as the one sacrifice for sin, and as the ever-abiding High Priest in the holiest of all. What a struggle must there often have been in his mind when approaching God, because he had no sacrifice to offer — nothing visible on which to lean — no victim to lay his hand upon. It must indeed have required real trueheartedness to Jesus to enable him to draw near — and to look at everything with which he had been formerly conversant as taken up in Jesus, so that all that he had seen before was now to be discerned by faith as fulfilled in Christ. And are we not often false to Jesus in this matter? Do we not often harbour the thought that something yet remains to be done — either by ourselves or by him — in order to our drawing near? Do we not often thus become occupied with the circumstantial of worship rather than with Jesus — the substance? Are we not often false to him in questioning our title to draw near, because we find distance in our own hearts, as if it was the warmth of our affections, instead of the blood of Jesus, which brought near? But oh, beloved, how false to Jesus has the Church been! The worshippers are often pressed down by a burdensome ritual, and allowed neither to know that they are once and for ever purged, nor that all is prepared for their entrance into the holiest. They are turned back again to that which is visible,

and go through the daily routine of service, never getting farther than the door of the tabernacle! They are set in the place of distant Jews, instead of that of priests sanctified for heavenly ministrations and worship. And how continually do we see souls led to put the act of worship in the place of Jesus. Surely this is not to draw near with a true heart. A doubt harboured as to the all-sufficiency of his sacrifice, or the perfect efficiency of his priesthood, or his tender sympathy and compassion, is not to draw near with a true heart. If we shrink back into a distant place after all he has done, are we true-hearted to Jesus? But what positive treachery to Jesus is it to set up an order of men as in greater nearness to God than others — virtually putting them within, and virtually putting others without. To lean on priests, or ministers, in worship, as if they were needed to that end, is absolutely denying the virtue and the person and work of Christ. But such things are the necessary offspring of departure from the truth of a sinner's justification before God, by the one sacrifice of Christ. Distant worship necessarily follows imperfect justification. And if a sinner's justification before God by the blood of Jesus be not seen, much less will entrance into the holiest of all by the same blood for worship be allowed as the common portion of the saints. But even where the truth as to justification has been recovered and is preached, we still see a form and a ritual of worship altogether subversive of the truth. The access proclaimed in the gospel preached is not permitted to those who have believed that preaching. Thus the saints are practically kept in a place of distance, and thus taught to be false-hearted to Jesus? Surely we might say, if every church and chapel in the kingdom were closed, and all the ministers of the gospel shut up in prison, that true-heartedness to Jesus would lead his saints to assemble themselves together to worship, by faith, in the holiest of all — knowing that there the ministry of the Great High Priest can never for a moment be suspended. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." As to this expression, "full assurance of faith," it by no means conveys the idea of a certain standard measure of faith as a matter of attainment. The reference is not to the measure of faith, but to its bearing on the right object. The faith may be the weakest possible, but let that, weak as it is, be in full bearing on its own proper object.

We have another form of the same word in the New Testament. It is said of Abraham, "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." So again — "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The moment the soul has laid hold on Jesus it is delivered from itself, and ought to be fully persuaded that all it needs is presented to it in the object before it — even Jesus.

It is this single eye to Jesus which we need in worship. The very things which man in his wisdom has thought to be helps to devotion are really its hindrances. Which of the senses do not men seek to gratify in the circumstantialia of worship? Now the very object of the apostle here is to turn away the worshipper from the things of sight and sense, to which he had been accustomed, in order to concentrate his soul on one single object, in which he was to find everything that he needed.

We can never look at our title to worship God, but we see our salvation. How blessedly has God linked these things together, and how perversely does man rend them asunder, either by calling on all to worship, believers and unbelievers, or by binding believers to a form which negatives the sense of complete justification. What we need in order to happier and holier worship is more simple faith in Jesus. Are we fully persuaded that Jesus has done all that is needed to make an acceptable meeting-place between ourselves and God? — then let us draw near. And what holy

freedom and liberty attends this — "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." The leper to be cleansed, in order to restore him to the privilege of worship, needed to be sprinkled with blood. (Lev 14:7.) The Israelite, who had touched anything which made him unclean, needed to have the water of purification sprinkled on him, but it only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. (Heb 9:13.) The priests at their consecration had the blood applied to them, that they might so draw near and minister before God. But what is all this compared with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience by the blood of Jesus? It is no longer a purifying of the flesh, but a purifying of the heart by faith. The flesh purified for worship might co-exist with an evil conscience, but a sprinkled heart never could. How entirely is a good conscience alone maintained by that which is not of sight, even by the purging power of the blood of Jesus.

Before Aaron could put on the holy linen coat he must wash his flesh in water (Lev 14:4); and so it is now — "Our bodies washed with pure water." We cannot put on our white robe unless we know what communion with the death of Jesus really is. How needful for us in our approach to our place of worship, even the holiest of all, habitually to remember that we have died, and that we are alive in Jesus. We have to do with the living God — and he too a consuming fire. All that is contrary to life has been set aside by the death of Jesus. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And it is as alive from the dead that we alone can approach him.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." It is literally "of our hope," not faith, and has reference to the sixth chapter — "that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Our hope is that we shall be there actually, the holiest of all being our own proper place as priests unto God: but by faith we now worship there in spirit. But it is hard indeed to maintain a profession contradicted, so far as sight goes, by everything in us and around us. Jesus witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that he was a king, without any mark of royalty about him. His confession seemed contradicted by his appearance. Timothy had confessed a good confession before many witnesses (1Ti 6:12), and he needed to be reminded of it. And so do we. For how constantly do we forget that we are what we are in hope. We could not give satisfactory proof to another that we are what we confess to be. We can indeed give the soundest reason of the hope that is in us, because the forerunner is for us already entered within the veil; but we cannot satisfy the restlessness of our minds, or the minds of others, by evidence. No; blessed be God, he has provided for our hope on surer ground than any evidence we could produce, even on the ground of its own immutability and faithfulness; for he is faithful that hath promised. The word is of great force, "let us hold fast," — let us tenaciously grasp. And why? Because our hope is that which Satan would try by all means to wrest from us. And has he not effectually done this in the Church at large by making that their hope, which is, in fact, the ground of their hope — even their justification. Present righteousness is the ground of Christian hope. The holiest of all is alone open to those who have been once and for ever purged. If our hope springs not from that within the veil, where is our steadfastness? Everything short of that may be shaken — and will be shaken. If therefore we know not accomplished righteousness, fitting us now for the holiest of all, the peace of our souls must be unsteady. An Israelite might approach the door of the tabernacle with a sacrifice to be offered, but that sacrifice had yet to be pronounced acceptable and to be accepted; but it was on the ground of an already offered and accepted sacrifice that the holiest of all was entered by the

high priest. Thus it is with our title to enter within the veil the one offering of Jesus has for ever given us liberty to enter there. How amazing is the craft of Satan in his devices against the truth! When he could no longer keep out of sight the doctrine of justification by faith, he contrived to rob it of its real power, even where received, by practically putting it as the object of hope, instead of the present possession of all who have come to Jesus. The peace of the gospel is thus practically unknown, although the gospel itself is truly stated. And this hope of justification by faith always opens the door for distant worship. In how many real believers is the peace of the gospel hindered by their very acts of worship.

Let us therefore, beloved brethren, grasp and maintain this confession as our best treasure — Having present righteousness by faith, our hope is nothing short of the holiest of all; and there we worship in Spirit now. Our hope is independent of ourselves — it hangs on the immutable faithfulness of God — it is secured by the blood of Jesus, and it is already made fast within the veil; for Jesus is there, and there for us. Beware of mock humility, which is only the cover of unbelief and self-dependence. Look at yourselves and you are hopeless; yea, nothing is before you but a fearful looking for of judgment. Look at Jesus and know your hope; for where is he? In the holiest of all as the forerunner! Let this check all wavering, and answer every doubt and every difficulty. In spite of all appearances, hold fast the profession of the hope without wavering.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Here we are reminded that we have also to perform our priestly work. The priest had to consider, in cases of leprosy, — and so, as priests, we have to consider one another, not whether we are cleansed or not, for it has been authoritatively pronounced of us by the Great High Priest himself, "Now ye are clean," — but we are to consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. The expression is remarkable — "consider one another." There is but one, even the Lord himself, who stands in the authoritative place of the priest to the church, therefore we are to consider one another. How entirely is this exercise of our common priestly function nullified by again setting up an order of priesthood to prescribe to us. What is the Confessional? What the Absolution? — but the priest again pronouncing the leper clean! And how effectually does such a thought hinder our considering one another. We can only do this as standing in grace ourselves, and recognizing others as standing in the same grace and the same nearness to God. It is as together standing in the holiest of all that we are to consider one another. There we are thus to help each other to detect what is inconsistent with that our high and blessed standing. There is no room for rivalry now — all are priests; but abundant room for love; and our love for each other is to be measured by the love that has brought us where we stand. And as to good works, they also are to be judged by the same standard. No lower standard than the sanctuary itself must now be taken to determine what are good works. What becomes the holiest itself alone becomes those sanctified to worship therein. It is not what men call good works, but what God estimates as such, to which we have to provoke one another. The costly ointment poured on the feet of Jesus, wasteful and extravagant in the eyes of an ancient or modern utilitarian, was a good work in the eyes of Jesus; the two mites of the widow more costly than the splendid offering of the rich. How little of what men think good is really so before God; and how entirely what God esteems as precious is despised among men. Hence Christ was despised and rejected of men; and hence really Christian works are now despised of them. How needful then is it for us to be in spirit in the holiest of all, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. But not only is there to be this constant

provocation to love and to good works, it is also added, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." When Israel came into the land, they were not to offer their sacrifices, or to worship, at any place they might select, but at the place where the Lord should put his name only. Jerusalem was the place whither the tribes went up. Put yourself in the position of a believing Hebrew on a solemn feast day in Jerusalem — one of the three thousand converted by the first sermon of Peter. Multitudes from all quarters might be assembled around him — Jerusalem filled with worshippers — while he would be apart from all that which attracted them. But would not his soul have many a struggle in keeping away from the festive and religious throng? Would he not have almost appeared an enemy to his country and to the temple? But was it really so? Think farther of the contrast he must in his own soul have seen between the upper chamber, or any other unpretending locality, and the splendid temple. Must it not have needed much simple faith in Jesus, to meet together to break bread and worship with a number as unaccredited as himself, without any visible priest to order their worship, any sacrifice, any incense, any altar, any laver? Would not the multitude keeping holy-day give as it were the lie to the worship he had been engaged in, as if it had been no worship at all? Surely there is great force in the words, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is."

Yes; some drew back from acknowledging that as worship, which was without the outward form — some even who believed in Jesus. It cost too much to own Jesus as everything by disowning all the shadows. The assembling of themselves together thus was the great testimony against the religion of the world, and that Jesus was all. It was the profession that he was the substance of worship, and that worship must now be according to the place and power of his priesthood. The despised company in the upper chamber were feeding on the substance, while the religious world in their gorgeous temple were bowing before the shadows. That despised company had by faith access into the holiest of all; they knew that Jesus as the forerunner had entered there for them; and in this knowledge of him, they could meet at any time and at any place, for the name of the Lord was recorded in the place of their meeting. They were worshippers in the sanctuary, let the scene of their gathering on earth be where it may.

Hence we find that "on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." (Acts 20:7.) They might or might not have some one to minister the word unto them — that was accidental; their coming together was for a positive and specific object. Paul came in among them and preached, but that was by the way. They came together as disciples. And if man puts a hindrance in the way of disciples coming together, is it not treading under foot the Son of God, who has not only given them the liberty, but who has made their doing so the point of collective confession of his name? There is need of our exhorting one another as to this, for the danger is imminent of turning back to the old order. And the Spirit of God clearly saw the tendency of things that way, and that this would increase. That as the day approached when the Lord Jesus would be revealed, worship would become more and more worldly more and more after the ancient distant Jewish pattern. Hence the exhortation would in the progress of things be increasingly needed, to stand fast as disciples in the simplicity of grace. Nothing can be more gracious than the provision which the Lord has made against the increasing evil. Just in proportion as the thought in the minds of Christians has prevailed of a progression unto blessing in the world has worship adapted itself to the world. But when it has pleased God to open the eyes of any of his saints to see the steady progress in evil, and the great assumptions of the flesh, he has thrown them back more on

Christian simplicity. And our exhortation the one to the other, as we see the day approaching, is to test everything by the light of that day, and to see that nothing will then really stand which is not of Christ. Surely the Lord intends to make his saints sensible of all that they have lost; but in doing so to make them as sensible of the value of what remains. If he had to say to his people of old, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" This was not said to enfeeble, but to strengthen them. All the outward glory was gone, but still the Lord was there. And therefore it is said, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." God remaineth unchangeably the same, and his original power in deliverance was real strength in the midst of weakness; so that out of weakness they became strong. And this is God's provision for the comfort and strength of the saints, as they see the day approaching, and everything unprepared to meet it, to exhort one another to the use of what remains unto them; and whilst Jesus abideth in the holiest of all, and now appears in the presence of God for them, they can always draw near. Yes, it is our privilege to do so, now that the dispensation has well nigh run its course, equally as much as in the apostle's days. Men indeed have, by their perverseness, put many things between themselves and God, but that which giveth nearness still remaineth, even the blood of Jesus. Let us then draw near.

Beloved, how much is this exhortation needed at this day! Simple worship, although our high privilege, is despised! Believers need something more than the presence of the Lord to induce them to come together. Jesus is not really to them the great substantial ordinance of God. They are not glad when they assemble themselves together. Let us not forsake this, for if we do we are in danger of forgetting that we are once and for ever purged worshippers, and that our place of worship is the golden sanctuary itself, also once and for ever purged. (Heb 10:2; Heb 10:14.) There we have such an High Priest, one who can bring us in at once to the throne of the majesty on high, to us a throne of grace, although he who sits thereon is holy, holy, holy.

Beloved, it is your place of confession to contradict all assumptions of priesthood, all repetition of sacrifice, and all repeated absolutions, by drawing near. Your worship is to be characterized no less by confident nearness to God than by reverence to his name. The day is approaching. Its approach is marked by a return to ordinances. Hold fast your profession, and let it be Jesus against every pretension. For be assured that whatever is not of him is nothing better than a carnal ordinance, to be utterly disowned by the Lord when he appears.

If we look forward as to worship, what do we see there? All the shadows passed away, and only the substance presented. "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." So again, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him [worship him]: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." They shall serve and they shall reign at the same time. They shall then be manifestly priests and kings. But now in the acknowledgement that grace has already made them so, it is their privilege to approach by faith that glorious place in which they will in due time actually stand. Our best instruction is gathered by looking forward. It is the reality which is to be our pattern now. Not things on earth the patterns of the heavenly, but the substance known by faith stamping its impress on that which is present. Let us draw near "unto

him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

## 01.04. The Priesthood and the Law Changed

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The Priesthood and the Law Changed.

Heb 7:12.

Among the various aspects in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us, it is well oftentimes to distinguish between that which he is properly in his own Person, and that which he is as constituted of God.

It is most legitimate to trace him from the manger of Bethlehem, to his coming in the clouds of heaven in fully manifested glory. The Holy Spirit delights in this theme in tracing the lowly rod of the stem of Jesse, growing up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground, to the stately Branch in manifested beauty. (Isa 11:1; Isa 53:2; Jer 33:15; Zec 3:8; Zec 6:12; Luk 1:78.) So, again, it is now the special office of the Holy Ghost to glorify Jesus by testifying to us what he is, and is owned to be in heaven, whilst he is rejected on earth. In the reception of this testimony is found the great strength of the Church in its militant state here in the world. But there is something before all this. There is the tracing him down from heaven to earth, as well as tracing him up from earth to heaven, to return thence in manifested glory. It is this character of testimony to Jesus which the Holy Ghost presents to us in the commencement of the epistle to the Hebrews. It is true that the prominent subject is the official dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Apostle, Captain, and High Priest of our profession, — elevated far beyond Moses, or Aaron, or Joshua. But this elevation, whilst true of him officially, is far more true by reason of the essential dignity of his own person. God hath in these last days spoken to us by the Son. This is not an official title, it is his own real, proper, native standing, — belonging to him in a sense in which it belongs to no other. And herein is the grand characteristic difference between the Lord Jesus and all others. Many indeed are those of old upon whom the Lord hath put honour, who would have been nothing but for the honour thus put upon them. They are constituted and appointed to various offices, and not to own them in those offices would be to reject God. So also God has made Jesus both Christ and Lord. But who is he who is thus constituted, or made, of God? He is the Son. These constituted dignities cannot excel his own real glory, that which he had with the Father before the world was. His offices, dignified though they be, cannot in this sense exalt him. But he can give, and does give, the power and character of his own divine person unto every office which he sustains — unto every work which he has done. If he could be stripped of all his official glories, his own personal excellency and glory must remain untouched and undiminished. It is this which makes him alone the fit one "to bear the glory" which God may put upon him. When God put various glories on others, as on Moses or Aaron, or David, or Solomon, their failure to sustain the glory was marked in them all. And why? They were but men, having no power in themselves to stand at all. But Jesus is the Son, and "in him was life." And let it be remembered, in passing, that the only security for the saints bearing the glory which grace has made theirs, is that they are in union with him who is thus in his own person above all glory. "He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." To have office conferred by God is indeed a solemn responsibility, both

as it respects him who is so honoured, and as it respects others to acknowledge the honour conferred of God. It is thus our responsibility to acknowledge office in magistrates, and not to speak evil of dignities. To resist the power is to resist God. Those who bear the dignity may be nothing, the vilest of men, but the honour is put on them of God, and is to be acknowledged by us. If this be so, how fearful in the sight of God must it be to refuse to acknowledge any of the offices, styles, dignities, which God has conferred on his own Son. How fearful in any wise to trench on them by arrogating them to ourselves. This is the last form of manifested evil under the present dispensation, and that which will bring down the terrible judgment of God. It is the denial of "Jesus Christ, the only Lord God, and our Lord" (Jude 1:1-25) that is, the denial of him both in his own essential glory, and his conferred mediatorial glory. Let us then beware of anything which derogates from the honour due to Jesus, the Son of God. For how infinitely elevated is he above all others on whom official dignity has been conferred by God. God will strip men of all the glories he has conferred on them, and then what are they? Nothing. Man being in honour is like the beasts that perish. But when man is thus abased, in that day the Lord Jesus Christ alone shall be exalted. (Isa 2:1-22)

I desire, because of the importance of the subject, to refer to the eighty-second Psalm for illustration of the truth, that any honour conferred by God on men brings them out of obscurity, taken away it sinks them into their own proper nothingness. On the other hand, honour conferred on the Son adds nothing really to him: if it be taken from him or disowned by man, it only leads to his exaltation by God to every office in which man has failed, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty: he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked. They know not, neither will they understand: they walk on in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are out of course. I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you children of the Most High: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations." The reference of the Lord Jesus to this Psalm, in John 10:1-42, is very remarkable. He had asserted, in the most unequivocal manner, his own proper divinity, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). This, they said, was making himself God (John 10:33). Afterwards in John 10:38, Jesus again asserts this, and again they sought to take him (John 10:39). But he had previously (John 10:34-35) referred to this Psalm, to prove that they ought at least to have owned him in his official authority and power. His works testified of him that he was the sent one of the Father. Not one "unto whom the word of God came" merely, but him whom the Father had sanctified and sent into the world, he could say, "I am the Son of God." They should have believed him for his works' sake, for he did the works of his Father, and he and the Father were one. To others the word of God has only come — "I have said, Ye are gods." They had no dignity at all in themselves; they were of the earth, earthy, raised in official dignity by God. But he was the Son; he had been "sanctified and sent into the world;" he was "the Lord from heaven." How infinitely contrasted is Jesus the Son of God to all those of whom God has said, "Ye are gods." The moment their conferred dignity was taken from them, they would die like the common herd of men. They had no essential, inherent power or dignity. But he was one with the Father, he was in the beginning with God; nothing therefore could really touch his dignity, for it was intrinsically divine. It was not the word coming to him which made him what he was — though he had indeed been sanctified and sent into the world — it was what he ever was in himself which enabled him to be so

sent, and to sustain and give efficiency to all that was laid upon him. Hence, though in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, yet God would divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong. This shall be manifestly true when all official and delegated power shall be taken out of the hands to which God has entrusted it, and actually assumed by Jesus. Then shall that word be proved true of him — "Arise, O God, judge the earth; for thou shalt inherit all nations." The connection between the personal and the official glories of the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the prominent subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter the Son is presented to us as both in person and office far above angels. And it is the Son who is also the apostle of our profession. In the second chapter he is presented to us as our High Priest; and then we are exhorted, in the third chapter, to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Moses indeed was great. God had magnified him before Pharaoh, yet he was but a servant — one to whom the word of God had come — although God humbled Miriam and Aaron before him. But, mark, Jesus was not only officially greater than Moses, but it was his personal greatness which gave him the infinite superiority. He was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he that hath builded the house hath more honour than the house; and every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in another's house, but Christ as a Son over his own house. So again as concerning the high priesthood. Aaron was the high priest, but Jesus was the Great High Priest, — higher thus indeed than Aaron even officially. But this is not all; it is "Jesus the Son of God," infinitely higher personally than he is officially. "Seeing then that we have a Great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." (Heb 4:1-16) But yet further. It pleased God to constitute one individual a perfect type of the Lord Jesus Christ; that individual was Melchizedec. He stands before us typical of Jesus, both in person and office. The mystery with which God has so remarkably surrounded Melchizedec makes him a fit type of the Person of the Son; for "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father;" and so, no man knoweth Melchizedec, but God. And his being thus presented to us without genealogy, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," shows us also how truly he is "made like unto the Son of God." Thus, Melchizedec is so brought before us in the word of God, as to be made a most wonderful type of the divine and eternal Son of God — he is thus the personal type. "Abideth a priest continually;" for we know not when Melchizedec's priesthood began or ended; he had not as Aaron an official life — "beginning of days and end of life," — in this he is the official type. Melchizedec is indeed the only individual mentioned in the scriptures, as one whose own person qualifies him for office. And in this respect how apt a type is he of Jesus. With this general opening, let us meditate on the contrasts presented to us in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; that we may be able to draw the character of the worship from the order of the priesthood.

Most prominently do we here find the Person of the Priest set before us — "the Son of God," (Heb 7:3), in contrast with every office-bearing person. This might have been enough; but there are contrasts immediately resulting from the Person of the Priest, which must also be noticed. After the order of Aaron, they were men that die; but after the order of Melchizedec, it is he that liveth — liveth because he is the Son — because he has life in himself. True, he has laid it down and taken it again, that he might enter on his priesthood, having first by himself purged our sins.

Again. The order of Aaron was continued by succession. It was necessarily so. Aaron was a man in the flesh, and provision was made in case of his death for his son, that should minister in his

stead; as it is written, "And the priest whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments." (Lev 16:32.) This was the "carnal commandment," by which the priesthood of the Aaronic order was to be perpetuated. Succession is the only mode which man knows of perpetuating anything; this is necessary human order. The king cannot die, we are told. Why? Because his last breath is the placing his successor on the throne; so that the functions of royalty may never for a moment be suspended. Succession is necessarily after the law of a carnal commandment. We need not wonder, therefore, that men, should have turned back to this order, as being that which is most natural and human. But God has made other provision for his Church; his Church knows no successional priesthood. The Son is made Priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. It is still what he is in himself that gives the character to his priesthood. And that which is characteristic of this priesthood is equally so of the whole order of priesthood in the Church — it is unsuccessional. The Church's position in this dispensation is in life and in power. There is no room for a carnal commandment in the matter of priesthood or worship either, because Christ's Priesthood in heaven is perpetuated in himself. No one succeeds to him there; he is "a High Priest for ever;" and none is needed to succeed the Holy Ghost in the Church on earth; "he shall abide with you for ever." If man were to succeed man as the head of authority in the Church, a carnal commandment is necessitated — the order cannot be maintained without it. And this is what man has introduced into the Church; thus putting the Church under human headship and carnally appointed authority. But how awful is this, when God's order for his Church is the presence of the Holy Ghost dispensing gifts according to his will. Where, under this divine order, is there room for a carnal commandment?

I no longer marvel at the strength of the language of the preceding chapter, relative to the certain consequences of turning back from the proper order and hope of the Church. It must be subversive of the whole order of the dispensation. It must be virtually putting Jesus out of his priesthood, crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Once admit succession, and, as a necessary consequence, union with Jesus in the power of an endless life is denied; for such union must be utterly incompatible with the law of a carnal commandment. And let the contrast be distinctly marked; it is not after the law of an endless life, but after the power of an endless life. The kingdom of God is in power; the Spirit we have received is the Spirit of power; the peril against which we are warned is the form of godliness, but the denial of its power. It is not now form against form, carnal order against carnal order, place against place; but it is power, that is life, against everything. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Such are the Israel of God, who have power with God and man, and prevail. But to pursue the contrast. The priests after the order of Aaron were called indeed of God; but Jesus was constituted by an oath. "The Lord sware and will not repent, thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec." The priesthood in Israel under the law, like all with which it was connected, stood on the ground of the competence of the priests to maintain their place in faithfulness to God. It was based upon a carnal commandment it was conditional. The word of the Lord to Eli was, "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." And the oath to Eli was an oath of irreversible judgment on his house. (1Sa 3:14.) And this setting aside of the house of Eli was to raise up a faithful Priest (1Sa 2:35; Heb 2:17), to do according to all that was in the heart and mind

of God, even the Priest who is made with an oath. And how blessedly in keeping is the New Covenant with this new order of priesthood. It is a covenant of promise, of promise made sure by God's having engaged his own power to render it effectual; and, therefore, to show the immutability of his counsel, he has confirmed it with an oath. (Heb 6:17.) The New Covenant, therefore, belongs to the Melchizedec priesthood, and both are with an oath. And it is here written, "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made Priest . . . by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant."

Once more; although it has been somewhat anticipated. Under the order of Aaron there were "many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death." The high priesthood passed from one to another; there was succession. God in judgment had indeed set aside one family of Aaron, and brought in another; still there was a succession of men through whom the high priesthood descended. This alone was enough to destroy all dependence on that priesthood; for though there might be a merciful and faithful priest, still he would die, and he might be succeeded by one who would make the offering of the Lord to be abhorred, as did Eli's sons, using their office for exaction of their dues, and more than dues, but not aiding the worshipper. This must always attend the connection of office with a succession of men appointed after a carnal commandment. "But Jesus, because he continueth ever, hath a priesthood that passeth not from one to another. Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost [i.e., from the beginning of their career unto the end] those who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." This necessarily, and most simply, perpetuates the perfectness of High Priesthood after the order of Melchizedec; one divinely perfect is for evermore consecrated thereunto.

How marked is it, that in everything which came under the law of a carnal commandment, there wanted perpetuity; it was so, whether we look at the persons, the sacrifice, or the intercession. But now that there is perpetuity in the Person, the like character attaches to the priesthood, the sacrifice, and, the intercession.

Surely, the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change in the whole law and order of worship. To go back to the old pattern now, what is it but virtually to deny the personal glory of the Son, as giving efficacy to his work and office? It is, as has been before noticed, to tread under foot the Son of God. It must necessarily transfer the thought from his order of priesthood to another order. It must introduce human copies of patterns and shadows once given by God, claiming for such things the value due only to the heavenly things themselves. It must sink the place of worship from heaven to earth. It must consecrate that which God has left out as profane. It must establish form, instead of leaving room for power: producing uniformity, to which the flesh can bend, but to the utter denial of unity in the Spirit, of which the flesh must be ignorant.

Let us then most seriously consider what Christian worship really is. Whether we look at our own standing or at the change which has taken place in priesthood, there is necessitated an entire change in the order of worship. We have seen Aaron's priesthood adapted to the law, and Christ's to the new covenant. Aaron's priesthood was intercessional, so also is Christ's. The Church is alone sustained by the constant intercession of Christ. It is what our necessities require, beautifully and graciously adapted to them. But whilst this is most blessedly true, is there not another and very different sense in which it is said, "such an High Priest became us." The intercession of the Great High Priest for us is only for us whilst the Church needs it, it has, so far as the Church is in

question, a termination, and it may well be said to be an Aaronic service carried on after the Melchizedec order. But if we take a larger thought of the priesthood of Jesus, comprehending his Person and the whole Melchizedec order, do we not find his priesthood adapted to us, not only because of our infirmities and necessities, but likewise because of that high standing which we by his grace have received — that we might hold fast our profession?

Surely when the Church needs not a priesthood of intercession, as it will not in glory, it will enjoy all the peculiar privileges proper to the Melchizedec order — a constant reciprocation of blessing and praise. But our standing is really as high now as then — "now are we the sons of God;" and the saints are now to know the High Priest suitable to their greatness. We are "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." To such Aaron's priesthood is not suitable. "For such an High Priest became us." What is it that has constituted us holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling? Surely these two things — that the Son has by himself purged our sins, and that he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren. If there is not the same life in them as in himself, he could not call them brethren. "Because I live," says he, "ye shall live also." Is he anointed with the Holy Ghost? they too, in virtue of having been cleansed by his blood, and united with him as risen, are anointed with the same. He indeed above his fellows, but they with the same blessed Spirit; for he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Now the High Priest suitable to such a standing as this must not only be holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, but also "made higher than the heavens." The old order would necessarily keep the holy brethren out of the holy place, making those who are partakers of the heavenly calling mere earthly worshippers. And is not this a present fact? Worship should so elevate the soul of the worshipper that nothing should be known between him and God, save the Great High Priest; but instead of this the ritual to which many saints are subjected causes them to bow the head like a bulrush. But to proceed. Such an High Priest became us, "who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law — the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

How unlike Aaron is Jesus our Great High Priest! All his present priestly ministration is based upon the one accomplished sacrifice of himself. This entirely affects the order of worship, and changes it; for our worship is just as truly based upon the already accomplished sacrifice as is his Priesthood. It is our starting-point as worshippers. We are only in the profane place, if we approach not God on the ground of our sins having been for ever purged by Jesus; we cannot avail ourselves of his priesthood until this be acknowledged. The Great Priesthood is alone suitable for those who have come to God through him. Into what an elevated place then has that one sacrifice brought us! No place under heaven is suitable for his ministry or our worship. Both are properly heavenly. Worship therefore should ever lift us up to where Jesus is — the Great High Priest who is passed into the heavens. Aaron was called of God to his priesthood in the tabernacle made with hands, but Jesus has been called of God to his priesthood in the heavens, the true tabernacle, and we are made partakers of the heavenly calling. The dignity of his Person, the groundwork of his priestly ministry, and the place of its exercise, all alike proclaim the necessity of a change in the law and order of worship. The law with its ritual and worship all hang consistently together, but it made nothing perfect — it bore on its front plain marks of infirmity. There is great

strength of contrast in the last verse; it is not merely men contrasted with the Son, but men having infirmity. And so the word of the oath has its priesthood and order in beautiful harmony; but to attempt to blend the two, as the Church has done and is doing, is to introduce the worst confusion. Jesus has not his honour, and the saints have not their privilege.

Let us remember that under the Levitical priesthood there was no provision made for any, either priest or people, to follow Aaron within the veil. Aaron in this respect had no fellows. Now the Son also takes this place of Aaron's. He has no fellows in any of his sacrificial work, or in offering the incense. But he has fellows within the place of his ministry. Under the Levitical priesthood there was no fellowship even as to place between the people and the priests; they worshipped in distinct places: but now all is changed, for that order is now introduced of which it is said, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." We are one in life, and therefore identified as to position with Christ Jesus. He can say in heaven itself, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me." There was indeed the great principle of representation in the Levitical priesthood, Aaron bore the names of the tribes of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart, — but there was not the truth of union. There could not be; or even on the supposition that there could have been, what would it have availed — union with a man having infirmity. But now that we have such an High Priest as the Son, in the power of an endless life; and that he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; to have such an one not only as our representative, but as him with whom we are united, what an entire change must this effect as to the whole order of worship.

Aaron bore the names of the tribes as something apart from himself, but our High Priest as completely identified with himself. How far all typical representation falls short of the reality! Just as in the sacrifices, one might see the innocent suffering for the guilty; but the reality — the Holy Lamb of God suffering for sin, feeling the shame of it as his own, and enduring the wrath of God — was incapable of being represented. So there might be some faint shadow of identity between the priest and the people but the reality of living union with the Son was incapable of being typically expressed. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which is now the great order of God. It is not only through him, that we come, but now in Christ Jesus ye who were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Jesus. There is now therefore the anointed High Priest, even Jesus, but he has fellows anointed also those who worship through him are not the people who stand without, but priests sanctified for the immediate presence of God. The law of worship now is entirely priestly. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Can we find language so suitable to describe the danger of returning to ordinances, or the setting up again a priesthood on the earth between the Great High Priest and his fellows, as that found in Heb 6:1-20 and Heb 10:1-39? May not these passages well make the ear that hears them in these our days to tingle? And can we find any occupation so blessed, whilst journeying through the wilderness, — any so fitted to raise our souls out of the dust, and make us tread in spirit the heavenly courts, — as to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus?

Holy brethren, does it appear to you that this paper is not strictly on the subject of worship? You will find it only so in appearance; for our power of real acceptable worship is in allowing nothing to come in between our souls and our Great High Priest. It is what he is, not what we are, that we have to consider. Are we ever so truly exalted as when magnifying him? Is it not most practically true in this sense also, that he which humbleth himself shall be exalted?

## 01.05. A Minister of the Sanctuary

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A Minister of the Sanctuary.

Heb 8:2.

It is profitable to seek to place ourselves in the circumstances of those to whom the New Testament scriptures were immediately addressed. Not that the same scriptures are not immediately applicable to ourselves; they are so because applying to that which is essential and characteristic; but by placing ourselves among those first addressed, we shall the better discern the way in which the Holy Ghost regards and uses the circumstances of the saints in communicating truth unto them. Indeed when circumstances are thus duly regarded, we shall find perspicuity given to many statements which otherwise might be general or vague; and this will be found especially the case, when any direct contrast with the habit of thought and tone of feeling of those addressed is intended. A Hebrew under the law moved in a religious atmosphere. From his childhood he had been accustomed to look with veneration on the goodly buildings of the temple. He was instructed concerning sacrifice and incense. He was brought up to revere the consecrated priesthood. The priest in his consecrated garments, coming forth to bless the worshipping people, must have been an impressive though familiar object to him. He must necessarily have attached the most solemn importance to the unseen work of that priest within the holy place.

Now suppose such an one as this, taught of God, and so receiving his testimony concerning Christ, — he believes on Jesus, owning him as the Son of God, the Christ of God, and the Lamb of God. He finds peace in his soul unknown before; and he has confidence with God through Jesus Christ, by whom he has now received the reconciliation.

We know that thousands of Hebrews were thus brought into light and peace through faith in Jesus; to such was the Epistle to the Hebrews primarily addressed. But how would such believers stand in relation to their former associations? Having personal peace of conscience through the blood of Jesus, would they continue worshippers according to the order of that economy in which they had been brought up? No. That which gave them peace would destroy every old association. Having learnt the preciousness of the blood, by finding through it remission of sins, they would have to learn it as equally precious, because by it they were redeemed from the "vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers." They would have access as worshippers to heaven itself — and that too as a holy priesthood, there to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The consequence must be that in the city of solemnities itself such an one finds himself in the wilderness. He can no longer have fellowship with the multitude who keep holy-day. His temple and his High Priest are now in heaven and if he went up to the temple in Jerusalem at the hour of prayer, he there has to testify that Israel are blindly groping amidst the shadows, and that all the promises of God are yea and amen in him whom they had slain, but whom God had exalted to his own right hand. But though thus full of heavenly communion and intelligence, such an one would appear to the eyes of those around him as though he had been cut off from Israel yea, he might actually have been put out of the synagogue. (John 16:2.) If he would speak of worshipping God,

he would have it cast in his teeth that he had neither sanctuary, nor altar, nor sacrifice, nor priest! Hard indeed must it have been to have maintained that he had all these, when apparently he could not point to one of them. Hard indeed to hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope steadfast unto the end. But with a single eye to Jesus all this was possible. Yea there ought to have been a confidence and rejoicing in the assertion of what he had found, far superior to all that he had left. All he had left was visible and present indeed — things which were palpable to sense — and all he had found was known only to faith but still he could say what he had. He could testify that the only value of all that God once established amidst Israel was found in its representing that which he now in substance knew in heaven. And he could therefore say, "Taste and see that the Lord is gracious." But how strange and irregular must it have appeared to such to assemble for worship without any single visible essential of worship; no prescribed or consecrated place; no sacrifice; no ministering priest. But here came in the profession — that all these they had. "We have," says the apostle, "such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Throughout this Epistle, the apostle takes most lofty ground. He takes his place as one with us — i.e. one of the Church and tells out what we have. He will not allow any pretension to interfere with ours. And he seeks to stir us up to the holding fast of our profession. But has there not been sad declension here? We have been false witnesses of the grace of God; as though he had not blessed us already so abundantly that we can, to the glory of his grace, challenge every pretension, and assert our profession to be yet higher. Oh that the Lord would lead our souls consciously to take this standing, that by it we might be able to contradict every pretension of the world and of the flesh, whether religious or otherwise! "We have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens." "We have an hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." "We have an altar, whereof those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." And, we have "a minister of the sanctuary."

Let us now turn to the consideration of the Lord Jesus, as this "Minister of the Sanctuary." The apostle Paul was not a minister of the sanctuary; he worshipped there through the ministry of another. He had as much need of this ministry as any of his converts. He stood on the same level with them, in relation to ministry in the sanctuary. He had indeed a most blessed ministry, in a peculiar sense his own, the ministry of reconciliation among the Gentiles. He had received the reconciliation through Jesus Christ himself, and by his preaching others likewise received it; he could speak of it as special grace, that he should have been put in the ministry: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious." But he was not called out from the multitude of believers, as the priest was from the multitude of Israel, to minister for them before the Lord (Heb 5:1-14) though he surely was a chosen vessel to bear the Lord's name to the Gentiles, and though he had a certain place of authority and eminence in the Church itself. But however distinct may have been his ministry, or even ministries, he was one of a common priesthood. He well knew that there were but two ranks in Christian priesthood the Great High Priest and the priests. He was one of the priests; and therefore, though he could magnify his office as an apostle of the Gentiles, he could not magnify his priesthood. Hence he writes authoritatively as the apostle, while before the Great High Priest he is but brother among brethren. The great subject of priesthood, which he so largely discusses in the Epistle to the Hebrews, demanded that the apostle should himself take the place of a worshipper that thus his own peculiar office might sink

into nothing before the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Thus does the apostle acknowledge and declare that Jesus, the Son of God, alone, is the representative Priest on the earth. Would that in this Paul had had more successors. The apostle Paul then was a minister of the Gospel to every creature under heaven, and a minister too of Christ's body, the Church, on earth (Col 1:23-25); but it was not by the intervention of his ministry that any worshipped. The disciples needed his instruction and guidance, and were to know that he had authority but they were enabled to worship as well in the absence as in the presence of the apostle. He might have led their worship, or he might have followed others in it. His office was lost, so to speak, when they stood together in the attitude of worshippers before the Great High Priest: he might have prayed with the disciples, (as Acts 20:36), or they with him (as Acts 21:5). It is indeed most important clearly to distinguish between the common standing of all regenerate persons as priests unto God, and diversities of ministry. Paul and Barnabas were set apart (Acts 13:1-52) for a distinct ministry to the Gentiles; but this was not setting them apart as ministers of the sanctuary. They could be ministers of the sanctuary in no other sense than that in which all saints minister there. If they presume to more than this, they must deny either the proper standing of the saints of God, or the alone place of the Son of God. For in the sense of being "ordained for men in things pertaining to God," Jesus is the ONLY minister of the sanctuary. It is therefore no light matter to set up such a pretension as that which an ordered priesthood certainly does. It interferes with the prerogative of Jesus. It is a fearful instance therefore of human presumption or ignorance. The sanctuary in which Jesus ministers is not on earth, as that was in which Aaron ministered, but in heaven itself. Even there he is pre-eminent; "anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows;" but all the redeemed saints of God worship there, through him, as equal one with another. But it is nevertheless true that God has now a ministry on earth, as well as a ministry in heaven. But these ministries differ most essentially. The ministry on earth goes forth from God to bring sinners to himself, upon the ground of his manifested love in the gift and sacrifice of his Son. The ministry of the sanctuary is a ministry on behalf of those already brought nigh unto God by the blood of Jesus. In the former there is nothing positively priestly. The minister of the Gospel does nothing for the sinner — for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord — but he proclaims what the Son of God has done; what God has wrought, and what God declares. On the other hand, the minister of the sanctuary is actually occupied with doing something for the worshipper; for those who have come to God through Jesus, and who have free access into the holiest of all. The minister of the Gospel has to tell sinners of the work of sacrifice; a work done on earth, a finished work, never to be repeated: but the work of the priest is continuous; it is a work on behalf of believers alone; a work for the true worshippers, and which they still need. To confound these ministries is sad confusion indeed. To make the ministry of the Gospel priestly in its character is to deceive sinners into the thought that they are worshippers; and it is at the same time entirely to obscure the blessed ministry of reconciliation. Nor is that error less dangerous which has confounded the ministry of the Spirit, by gift in the Church, with the true service of the one minister of the sanctuary. It is an awful invasion of his office to suppose that any in the Church are peculiarly priests.

Now if this great truth has been sufficiently cleared, that there may be many ministers of the gospel, and many specially gifted to minister in the Church, but only one minister of the sanctuary, it remains for us to consider the Lord Jesus in this office. And there are three points on which I would rest. 1st. — The minister himself. 2nd. — The place of his ministry. 3rd. — The character of

his service and our special interest in it.

1. "We have such an High Priest." The person of our Great High Priest, and the connection between his person and his office, having been already rested on in a previous paper, I would now say, that this language is in its character boasting. And it is rightly so; for we may glory in the Lord. It is right to challenge any comparison with him; and to leave who will to draw the conclusion. But this is not all said of him here: it is added, "who is set down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens." It has been noticed already, that the attitude of sitting down, contrasted with the standing of Aaron, shows that the one has completed the work of sacrifice, which the other never did. But there is this also to be noticed — the place in which he is seated, "on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." How every expression of honour and dignity seems to be collected together here. What a seat is this! There is our High Priest seated! And there is this other blessed truth; — he has taken his seat there at the call of God. "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand till I make thy enemies thy footstool." Aaron was called of God, but he was never called upon to sit down even in the worldly sanctuary. He was never even spoken with as Moses, face to face by God. He was not up in the Mount with God in the glory as was Moses, he was below with the people. But what a value was stamped by God on the sacrificial work of Christ when he was thus called of him. The exaltation of Jesus to the seat on which he now sits proves most abundantly the value of the blood he has shed. How precious that blood must be to God — how perfect its efficacy in his sight! Let us often meditate on the dignity of our High Priest as shown, not only by his person, but also by the seat unto which he has been called of God; remembering that he has taken that seat in consequence of his having "by himself purged our sins." The word here rendered "minister" is not the word ordinarily applied to the ministry of the Gospel. The apostle Paul does indeed once apply it to himself (Rom 15:1-33) — "the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles;" but in that instance the apostle is not speaking of ordinary Gospel ministry, but of his own special ministry as the apostle of the uncircumcision. This instance therefore only serves to mark the peculiar force of the term. It properly means one who sustains some distinct and onerous office for the public good; and, in some instances, at his own cost: such, for example, as the sheriff among ourselves. The word has been transferred to our language in liturgy; the public service of God. It might therefore be rendered — "as soon as the days of his ministration [liturgy] were accomplished." (Luk 1:23.) Zacharias, as a priest, performed divine service for the people. So it is said of the Lord a little below in this eighth chapter, "but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry" [liturgy]; more excellent than that of Zacharias or the Jewish priests. He alone performs divine service for others. He does this as the great public minister of the Church in heaven. Any number among the saints might minister and fast before the Lord on earth (Acts 13:1-52), but they did not stand in such a relation to God as is involved in performing a service for others which they could not undertake. No saint stands towards God in such a relation to any other saint; — if any assume it, they in this assume the exclusive prerogative of the Son of God.

I believe that our souls are little aware of the deadening effect of looking to any set of men to perform public service for us to God. It must necessarily take away the soul from immediate dependence on the great public minister, and his divine service in heaven. It is not that every one is qualified to lead the public worship of the saints, any more than that every one is qualified to teach the saints or to preach the gospel; but there are none who stand in the same relation to the

Church that Zacharias did to the Jews. (Luk 1:1-80) None who are called to perform service for them, so that if such a person was wanting, the saints could not worship. Let the saints ever remember this, and guard against any intrusion on that office solely belonging to the Great High Priest. Divine service is now performed in heaven by the one Great High Priest, and he is jealous of the intrusion of any into this his office; as he was when Korah and his company intruded into the office of those whom he once ordained to perform divine service on the earth.

Divine service, then, is only performed for us in heaven. We may, i.e. all Christians may, perform it on earth before the Lord, as did they of Antioch. (Acts 13:1-52) I do not at all doubt the antiquity of liturgies, nor raise any question as to their spirituality; but this I may safely affirm, that not a vestige is there found in the New Testament of an ordered ritual; and that a liturgy could have had no place in the Church, till it had lost the sense of the One who performs divine service in heaven, by going back to the pattern of an earthly priesthood; and how all the systems, with which we now see liturgies connected, show that such declension there has been. That such was the tendency even in the apostles' days, the epistle to the Hebrews abundantly proves. That some had drawn back and neglected the assembling of themselves together is distinctly stated. And as the Spirit of God in this epistle expressly meets such a condition of things, this epistle becomes of peculiar value to the saints in days like the present, when Satan is so plainly working in the same way.

Remember, it is no question between the comparative advantage of one ritual above another; or whether there may not be evangelical truth and spiritual breathing in a liturgy; it is a much more solemn question. It is a question concerning the assumption by men of an office belonging alone to the Son of God. Korah and his company might have intended to adhere ever so strictly to the directions for priestly service; but that was not the question; it was one of personal intrusion into an office unto which God had not called them. Indeed, they perished with censers and incense in their hands; the controversy of God was with them. And just so is it of all false assumption of office in the Church. It is not a question of what may or may not be done in the office; it is the intrusion into it which is so fearful a sin; for is not reproach cast upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven — is he not trodden under foot, if the thought is allowed of the necessity of any one person, or any order of persons, to perform divine service for us on earth? "We have" — blessed be his name! — "a minister of the sanctuary" always performing divine service for us above. Be it our soul's joy to know it more and more.

2. We must now glance at the place of his ministry; his "more excellent ministry." "A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

Moses was indeed faithful; he did everything, "as the Lord commanded Moses," unto the most minute detail. Everything was made according to the direction of God; all the vessels of ministry were arranged in the order prescribed. "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle, and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle; and Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." This was the tabernacle which man had pitched; beautiful indeed and glorious, yet not the true tabernacle; it was only the shadow of that. And now the shadow is past; as it is said, "a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ." But still, do not our minds linger around the earthly shadows, and become occupied with the things made

with hands, instead of those which are made without hands? In the true tabernacle there is no human instrumentality whatever; all is of God. The furniture and the vessels, all so curiously wrought, are now only to be found in the various graces and several offices of the Lord Jesus Christ — "the body is of Christ." And all these are now displayed and exercised in heaven for us; he can stand in the immediate presence of God, there presenting for us his own fulness of excellency. Moses, the servant, could not bear the glory conferred on the tabernacle he had pitched; he was much inferior to that which his own hands had reared; but Christ as a Son is over his own house, and is himself its furniture and its glory.

What a solemn lesson are we taught here concerning earthly and human things. Human instrumentality that which is "made with hands" — "of this building" (creation) — whether respect to place, persons, or things, ever fails, and is all disowned of God. Nothing will stand but that which is "made without hands," i.e., of God. Men may think they honour God by rearing magnificent buildings, and dignifying them with the name of temple, or house of God; but they cannot be the true, because man and not God has founded them. Their device and their order all show them to be of the earth. It is well indeed if the very appearance of our worship here testifies that it is not of the worldly order and pattern. And this will be so, the more we realize that the place of worship is now changed from earth to heaven. There it is that the minister of the sanctuary exercises his most blessed office. The Lord Jesus Christ exercised no such ministry on earth; "for if he were on earth, he should not be a priest;" and therefore our place of worship must be heaven, because there are no accredited priests of God on earth to offer gifts or to perform divine service. (Heb 8:4)

3: And now briefly as to the ministry itself. For the Lord Jesus Christ ministers unto God in the priest's office; ministering for us in it, "we have such an High Priest." The ministry of Aaron before God was in one of its parts representative; he bore the names of the children of Israel on his shoulders and on his heart, "when he went into the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." This blessed ministry the Lord Jesus sustains for us. But not occasionally, as Aaron when he went in, but constantly; he appears in the presence of God for us. He ever presents the saints before God as associated with all his own fulness of excellency and glory. And this in the presence of God within the veil, as it is said, "whither the forerunner is for us entered." And again, "for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." How blessed is this: our names written in heaven, not in precious stones, but as "a seal upon his heart, and as a seal upon his arm." In manifesting his own perfectness and glory in the presence of God, Jesus appears for us! The real identification of the Church with Christ was but faintly shadowed by the garments of glory and beauty worn by Aaron.

Then there was also the ministry of incense. This was a most precious ministry, because it was the medium of the worship of the people. But the offering of incense — all variously compounded as it was — was only occasional, and it might be interrupted. The fragrance of it was not perpetually before God. The plague had begun among the people, destructive judgment had come forth, when Moses bid Aaron take "a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense;" all this had to be done before Aaron could run into the congregation and stand between the dead and the living. "Behold, the plague was begun among the people; and he put on incense, and made an atonement for the people and the plague was stayed." (Num 16:1-50) But now the ministry of

incense is perpetual: "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." Hence he is able to save right through, from the beginning to the end. No plague of destructive judgment can come forth against the Church because of this. It is constantly upheld in perfectness by the power of the intercession of Jesus. It is this which ever keeps it in its right place before God, however infirm or erring here. The blessedness of the ministry of him who ministers for us in the true tabernacle is, that it is entirely independent of us. It is by him for us. Our conscious enjoyment of it will depend indeed on our walk, on our humbleness, on our self-judgment, on many things but the ministry itself depends alone on our unfailing High Priest. He is a faithful minister, ever performing his functions in a manner well-pleasing to God; whether our souls are realizing the value of what he is doing or not. Every saint is upheld by the intercession of Jesus even in his most thoughtless mood. Priesthood is part of the work of grace — grace that provides for the putting away our every sin, and aiding our every infirmity, and bearing our every waywardness, in order that we may never be out of the presence of God. Hence, the moment the conscience of a careless saint is reawakened, he may find full and instant access to God, because, though he has failed, the minister of the sanctuary has not. Long before he is alive to his failure, he is debtor to the ministry of Jesus for having been kept from falling. Little did Simon think of the sifting power of Satan, but the Lord, who had prayed that his faith might not fail, could point out to him his danger. And so with us oftentimes. We see our failures, or the might and craft of our enemies, and then how precious is the thought that the intercession of Jesus for us has been over all. We are led to value the intercession of Jesus — after failure or danger is discovered — as surely Peter was; but its real value is, that it is perpetually offered, and perpetually prevalent. However we may fail, therefore, the resources of faith can never fail; for faith reaches out to God, and God's provisions of grace in Jesus, over every failure. If there be one deeper anguish of soul than another, it surely must be for a saint to become conscious of sin, but to be without faith to look to God's gracious provision to meet it; but Jesus prays that our faith may not fail.

We are apt to regard the intercession of Christ only as occasionally exercised on our behalf, and exercised because we have applied to it; yea, we know that men have gone so far as to make it appear that the intercession of Jesus was only to be called out by a secondary intercession of others, such as the Virgin, or departed saints, or the Church. But how false is all this! No; his ministry is marked by the same grace now as when on earth. "I have prayed for thee" was his word to Simon Peter. And so when he saw the multitudes fainting, he well knew what he would do, and do without being asked. And so now, his intercession is of the same grace; it is according to his own divine and gracious estimate of our many needs. He knows how, in our practical danger, weakness, and foolishness, we look in the eye of God, and he ever makes intercession for us accordingly; maintaining us thus in his own fragrant perfectness. In the challenge of the apostle as to where a charge can be brought against God's elect, he winds up all with this, as though he could go no higher, "who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." In another aspect the present ministry of Jesus is one of offering; as it is said "wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Or, as it is subsequently said, "in which were offered gifts that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience."

Under the law, the worshipper might bring his offering to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, but then the priestly ministration began. The priest must lay it on the altar, where alone it could be accepted of the Lord. The worshipper himself could not offer immediately to the

Lord. It was only through the priestly ministration that it was an offering made by fire, a sweet savour unto the Lord. But now it is by the offering of Jesus himself, once for all, that we are sanctified as worshippers. Jesus gave himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God of a sweet-smelling savour; and now whatever comes up to God through him has the value of his own offering attached to it, and is of a sweet-smelling savour also. Thus God perpetually attests his own value of the offering of Jesus; even by accepting as precious, through him, all done or offered in his name. To ask in the name of Jesus is therefore of unfailing efficacy, because God is always well-pleased in him. We know, as priests, the divine estimate of him through whom we draw near to offer. What a comfort then it is to be assured that our persons, our prayers, our thanksgivings, and our services, have all of them, before God, the sweet savour of the name of Jesus set upon them. Everything we desire or do, as having the Spirit of Christ Jesus, however mingled, or however feeble, is thus accepted for Jesus' sake. And remember he is a perpetual offerer, as well as a perpetual interceder. He himself says of those who know not God in him and through him, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips." But to us, because of this his ministry for us, the word is, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks [making confession] in his name."

It was the priest alone who knew how to appropriate the sacrifice; he only knew what was for God, what for himself, what for the worshipper, and what was refuse. It is indeed most blessed for us that there is a minister for us which separates the precious from the vile; and which orders all according to God. Our Great High Priest thus ministers for us. He takes up that which seems to us so clogged with infirmity and so mingled with impurity, that we can discern no preciousness in it; and, separating the precious from the vile, he offers what is really of the Spirit in the full value of his own offering. If any soul is awakened to the desire of serving the Lord, what sorrow have they found in having to learn the wretched imperfectness of all that which they attempt. But if thus we are oftentimes dispirited and ready to grow weary in well-doing, let us remember this present ministration of Jesus for us; such should know its value, for their labour is not in vain in the Lord. How will "Well done, good and faithful servant," gladden the heart of many by and by, who here have only deplored their constant failures. Think you, dear brethren, that the Philippians thought their trifling remembrance of the apostle Paul would have found its way before God as an offering made by fire of a sweet-smelling savour unto God? But it did. The apostle, in communion with the Great High Priest, could see him take it up and present it in his own name. (Php 4:18.) Thus they were producing fruit, through Jesus, precious unto God; even as just before the apostle had said to them, "being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." (Php 1:11.)

Yes, let the saints as priests judge themselves and their works, and if they find, as they assuredly will find, but little of the precious, let them know the one who judges above, and who delights to take out the precious and present it to God in his own perfectness. Oh if it were not for this ministry on high, how could we read the word, "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

## 01.06. A Worldly Sanctuary

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A Worldly Sanctuary.

Heb 9:1.

We are often in danger of coming short of the truth of God, by attaching to the words of Scripture the technical meaning which they may have in the theology of our own days. The words "carnal," "flesh," "world," and "worldly," are known to us as expressive of that which is corrupt in itself, and which is disowned of God. But if we do not see that God has had long patience both with the flesh and the world, dealing with them both in a way of probation, previously to his finally giving them up, we shall fall greatly short in apprehending the truth of God. And not only so, but we shall also fail to perceive, that every effort which man is making now is but the repetition of that which has been previously attempted under far more favourable circumstances, and which has issued in lamentable failure. "Is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity."

Let us, then, remember that the time was when God said to the children of Israel, "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." This was "a worldly sanctuary." A sanctuary suited for God's dwelling-place in the world, and suitable also for the worship of a people of the world. God had constituted Israel to be his worldly people. He had fenced them off from the nations round about them by statutes, and judgments, and ordinances; and he had prescribed likewise "ordinances of divine service" adapted to their sanctuary and to their standing. All here was consistent all was worldly. Worldly worship, therefore, was then a holy thing in itself; for God had then appointed it. And it would be so now also, if God had a worldly people and a worldly sanctuary; but seeing he now has neither the one nor the other, the attempt to approach God, even by ordinances of divine service which he himself originally prescribed, is most sinful. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that offereth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not." This is a solemn word. The very act, which was once a religious act, acceptable to God, as the killing an ox for a sin-offering or a burnt-offering, is, when God delights not in it but man chooses to do it — of moral guilt, it is as murder before God! The incense which God himself so minutely directed to be compounded, and without which Aaron himself could not appear before the Lord, lest he die; for one to burn that incense is as if he blessed an idol!

Now, if such was God's estimate of his own ordinances of worldly worship, when those to whom they were given used them corruptly and wilfully, what must be the iniquity of introducing an order of things distinctly set aside by God? But has not this been done in the history of the Church, and is it not with renewed zeal being attempted in our own day? Forms and rituals of worship, suited only to a worldly sanctuary and a worldly people, are sanctioned and established on every hand.

And this is most fearful sin. The prophet of old was commissioned to rebuke Israel for their corruption and abuse of the worldly sanctuary and its worldly ordinances; but the apostle, rebukes the saints of God when tending to turn back to worldly elements. God was dishonoured of old by any neglect of the worldly sanctuary; he is dishonoured now by any attempt to copy or re-establish it. This enables us to determine the character of things now done in the professing Church. Such things, for example, as an altar on the earth, repeated sacrifice, the burning of incense, the consecrating of buildings and of ground, and of persons also, by outward ceremonial. Such like rites and ceremonies were so early borrowed from the Jewish worldly ritual, and transferred into the Christian Church, as to have become almost universal shortly after the apostles' days. But where is their warrant in the New Testament? Nay, how can any read therein, and not see the introduction of such things prophesied of, and solemnly warned against? How searching, then, is such a word as this — "I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I spake, they did not hear!" How needful is that recall to the only source of authority found in the word, "He that hath an ear let him hear;" "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches." This marks at once the place from whence our wisdom and guidance must be sought. Not in antiquity, or in the examples of Judaized Churches; but in the unquestioned teaching of the Holy Spirit himself to the Churches. This leads us away from all whose wisdom or authority can for a moment be questioned; it places the word of God itself before the conscience of every saint. Errors, however ancient, or venerable, or attractive, are thus detected, and the child of faith is forbidden to countenance them. This makes the path of faith at all times sure, though oftentimes very difficult; for nothing can be more sure than the steps of one guided by the Spirit of God and the word of God, and yet nothing more difficult than to have to walk in separation from all that exists around. It is, indeed, difficult to have to wind one's way through things so perplexing and so different as the religious systems of our own day. We have to avoid, on one hand, systems formed in imitation of things past; and on the other, systems more characterized by anticipations of things future. We have to allow that such things were once given by God, and that they will yet again be introduced by him, while invariably contending that they are positively opposed to his present workings.

There was a worldly sanctuary; — there is yet, in the coming dispensation, to be a worldly sanctuary; but now there is none. Existing systems are variously compounded of things proper to these three distinct periods. Some have drawn most from the past, some from the future, some, it may be, most from the present; but all involve sad confusion in the things of God. How many, who may in some measure have been emancipated from the ordinances of the ancient worldly sanctuary of the past dispensation, do not allow that there is a worldly sanctuary yet to come, have consequently chosen and instituted that in which God delighteth not, as much as others who are professedly imitating the ancient ordinances. Thus, while denouncing worldly elements, they themselves have invested themselves with that which can only properly belong to the worldly part of the dispensation to come. Thus they are involved in the sin of mingling things heavenly and things earthly. And is not all this a work of the flesh? Is it not an admission of worldly principles into the Church of God? Do we not see this in the fond desire for official distinction, dedicated buildings, permanent institutions and ordinances, and attempts to attract worldly repute, so common to the systems around? For all this is not confined to the Church of Rome, or the Protestant establishments of Europe, but, with scarcely less prominence, characterizes the systems of Dissenters also. And surely all these things, under whatever form seen, must be alike

offensive to God. We may go back to some ancient institutions of God, or forward to something he intends yet to introduce, or we may assert our own right to worship according to a pattern of our own devising but in each and all these cases we subject ourselves to that word, "When I spake, they did not hear."

It is important therefore to show that there yet will be a worldly sanctuary and worldly worship. This is very largely revealed in the prophets. (Ezekiel 40-48.) Their subject of hope is the restored nation, restored polity, and restored worship of Israel; but all, when so restored, under and in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Christian Church has in a great measure applied these predictions to itself, and hence we have the thought of a Christian nation, instead of the holy nation now to be gathered from out of all nations; hence too the thought of the union of the Church and the State — a thought to be most blessedly fulfilled when Christ as a King and Priest shall sit upon his throne; — hence too the antedating of the day when the kings of the earth are to bring their glory and honour unto the holy city hence the constant invitations which are given to the world to contribute its aid and patronage to the work of the Church. All this has secularized Christianity, and given a worldly character to its position and its worship. In the prophet Isaiah we read, "Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." That is, God would have an house on earth, a worldly sanctuary, but it should be open to all, it should not be confined to Israel. The Israel of that future day would have a standing higher than that which belonged to them as the natural seed of Abraham, and in that standing others should be associated with them, even those who were naturally sons of the stranger. Joined to the Lord, these should be brought to his holy mountain, and made joyful in his house of prayer. The Lord Jesus, the Master of the heavenly house now, and in due time the builder also of the earthly house and worldly sanctuary, adverts to this scripture in the sequel of his ministry. Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "Is it not written, My house shall be called an house of prayer for all nations?" (Mark 11:17.) It never was this in its first standing. But when it is of another building, then many nations will come and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Here we have most clearly a worldly sanctuary, a metropolitan temple on the earth the fountain of legislation and instruction for all who fear the Lord. Christians may perhaps think that to establish a cathedral on Mount Zion would be an approximation towards the fulfilment of this word. But if that were done the word would still be, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made, and all these things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

Ezekiel in his vision witnessed the departure of the glory of the Lord, first from the house and then from the earth (Eze 10:1-22, Eze 11:1-25); but in the Eze 43:1-27 he says, "And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east . . . and behold the glory of the Lord filled the house . . . And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile." Here again we read of that worldly sanctuary yet to be set up. But not to multiply quotations, let us only revert to two more,

both of which lead us onward from the time of the rebuilding of the temple of Zerubbabel. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with my glory, saith the Lord of hosts. . . . The glory of this house shall be greater, the latter than the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Here we must note that this worldly sanctuary is set up after the heavens and the earth have been shaken, which, according to the testimony of the apostle in the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, has not yet taken place.

Again: we read in the prophet Zechariah (Zec 6:12), "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a Priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Now all these testimonies, and they might be greatly multiplied, tell us of a worldly sanctuary yet to be set up; but not after the old order. There God will be known as the God of peace, even where the real glory will be, where Jesus will sit as a Priest upon his throne. There will be ordinances of divine service there, and ministering priests, and a worshipping multitude. One of those ordinances is mentioned in the last prophet referred to: "All the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." The conclusion therefore from these Scriptures is, that there was a worldly sanctuary suited to a worshipping people in the flesh on the earth and that there is yet to be a worldly sanctuary in connection with the new covenant, suitable for the true circumcision, the true spiritual seed, on the earth. (Isa 57:1-21) But there is no such sanctuary now. Now there is the heavenly sanctuary only. And this is the contrast so carefully drawn by the Holy Spirit in the ninth chapter of the Hebrews. The first tabernacle in connection with the worldly sanctuary had its place for a while. During its continuance the way into the holiest of all was not yet laid open, nor could there be any purging of the conscience. Now the contrast to this first tabernacle is not a second, set up like that on the earth, and in which the worshippers are to be kept at a distance from the holiest, but one set up by God himself in heaven, in which those only can enter who are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and anointed with the Holy Spirit; but into which all such do now in spirit enter as alike accepted and equally priests. The first tabernacle is therefore in this chapter looked at in contrast with "the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building," in which the Church now worships. Such a sanctuary as this heavenly sanctuary alone befits the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." Man, as man, can recognize the propriety of splendid buildings for the worship of God, and he has ever acted accordingly. But the spiritual house has nothing tangible in it. It is not adapted to the world, nor does it present attractions to the flesh. To one who only judged by appearances there might be some ground for the slander, that Christians were Atheists; for there was no visible or imposing attraction in their worship. Their worship was in the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. They did not attempt in their places of assembly to vie with the imposing architecture either of the temple at Jerusalem or the heathen temples around them. They had not then heard of "Christian ecclesiastical architecture," nor was the Church then the patron of the arts. Their temple was not of this building. And the ministry in the heavenly sanctuary corresponds with all this. It is

complete and perfect, because performed by one who is divine and who is beyond the range of this world's cognizance. Christ is entered once into the holiest, having obtained eternal redemption. The eye of man could scan the beautiful proportions of an earthly sanctuary, and mark the service of an earthly priesthood, but faith alone can enter into the heavenly sanctuary or delight in its glories. No one of its beauties or glories is displayed to the senses — it is the soul alone which has learnt the preciousness of Jesus which is now able to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts." The Lamb is the light and the glory of it. If he be not the object of faith, no wonder that men should again make the sanctuary worldly. But even when God had his worldly sanctuary here, how little of its beauty was displayed to the ordinary worshipper. He saw not the golden sanctuary, nor the cherubims and vessels of gold, — these things were most carefully hidden from his sight. The priests were charged to cover up the vessels of ministry, even from the sight of the Levites, who were to carry them. (Num 4:20.) The eyes of the priests alone were to rest on these holy things. Now it is the anti-types of those veiled and precious types with which we have to do. All believers now are priests unto God, and hence now all is open to faith; but open to faith alone. What eye hath not seen, God hath revealed to us by his Spirit. The Holy Ghost is specially come down from heaven in testimony of what he knows to be there. He could not witness of a heavenly temple and a heavenly priesthood, until the builder and sustainer of the temple, and the perpetual Priest, was in heaven.

All attempts to establish a worldly sanctuary now are therefore in direct opposition to the present testimony of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost by His coming was the conviction of the world's sin in having rejected Jesus, because testifying that God had exalted him; but that blessed Spirit is also, by his very presence in the Church, the conviction of the sin of every attempt now to set up a worldly sanctuary. He has to testify only of a High Priest now ministering in the heavens, "Jesus, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens," and consequently he can only lead the soul to him he glorifies. All who worship "in Spirit" must therefore worship in the heavenly sanctuary, for there alone does the Spirit lead. But man, as man, knows not the Spirit of God; the world cannot receive him. (John 14:1-31) It is no part of his ministry to guide the flesh into the presence of God, or to teach it to worship. His very presence here is God's most emphatic and solemn testimony of the entire ruin of man, and his utter incompetency for any good thing. Regeneration must therefore precede worship. The only true worshippers now are those who are separated unto God through "sanctification of the Spirit." These are now, "the holy priesthood," "the royal nation." And it is well for the saints themselves to bear constantly in mind this elementary truth. For it will enable them to test all that assumes to be worship. We may have the senses gratified, the imagination exercised, sentiment and feeling kindled, and we may mistake such things for worship but they are fleshly things, and when found in saints they sadly grieve the Spirit of God. These are things against which the saints have to watch, and which they have to mortify but these are the things which must be fostered and gratified by the wilful introduction of a worldly sanctuary. What more fearful than to confound such a work with the present work of the Spirit of God. Is not this to confound darkness with light, flesh with Spirit? The whole order of a worldly sanctuary must hinder the present testimony of the Spirit of God. Now to do despite to the Spirit of grace, to insult the Spirit of God, is indeed fearful sin. But what has the Spirit of grace to do in the worldly sanctuary? There the great points are the service of the ministering priest, and the duties of the suppliant people. Grace is excluded in the whole order. Grace establishes the heart, but the worldly sanctuary leads it back again to meats.

Hence, then, we worship God in the Spirit. Not in sentiment, not in refinement of the imagination, not in fleshly wisdom or in fleshly power, but in the Spirit. And this we are able to do, because the resurrection of Jesus has set aside the order of the flesh and of the world, and introduced us into the heavenly things themselves, and because the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in the Church on earth, from Jesus its Head, exalted in heaven. Any return, therefore, to a worldly sanctuary now must be as insulting to the Holy Spirit, as it is contradictory of the finished work of Jesus. But consider a moment longer how truly the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of grace. What is his blessed witness to us? Is it not to grace accomplished in glory in heaven? Jesus by his own blood has entered in once into the holy place, "having obtained eternal redemption." This it is which the Holy Ghost has revealed to us. Christ is there and there "having obtained eternal redemption;" and he "there appears in the presence of God for us." What need we more than this? Can we not by faith see here the witness of our own present acceptance, and the pledge of our own glory? There then is the scene of our worship; there is our sanctuary — our only sanctuary. And it is into this scene of accomplished and abundant blessedness that the Spirit of God has come to lead our souls. "Set your affection on things above" is his unceasing exhortation to us. May our hearts know more of the peace and glory of that heavenly sanctuary. And what should be the characteristic of the worship of the heavenly sanctuary? Surely praise; praise for accomplished redemption. And this sacrifice will not be wanting, if our souls realize our heavenly portion. None, indeed, may withhold their tribute of praise, who really worship in that sanctuary. Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore, are at God's right hand; and every heart, led of the Spirit there, declares, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever." Eternal redemption is the solid basis on which all such joy rests. Eternal redemption found in the perfect work of Jesus, that work which he himself ever presents on our behalf in heaven. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous; and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." The worldly sanctuary knew nothing properly of praise. There was no ministry of song prescribed by Moses. He could sing with the children of Israel the song of redemption after passing the Red Sea (Exo 15:1-27); but it was grace which had brought them over; they sung the triumph of grace. The worldly sanctuary had not then been ordered. In it there was nothing ever accomplished, and therefore no ground-work of praise. There was the constant repetition of the same services; the worshipper's conscience was unpurged, and hence he could never raise the voice of praise and thanksgiving. We speak of the tabernacle in the wilderness. But few even of the strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel were adapted to the temple service — that temple was a worldly sanctuary, and its blessings earthly; but the ministry of song went beyond all this, anticipating the full and accomplished blessing. Faith could sing then, only because reaching beyond the then present sanctuary; but faith sings now because in its present sanctuary it finds the themes of everlasting praises. Grace and glory, deliverance and victory, the wondrous salvation of God himself, are there the subjects of unceasing praise, for their accomplishment is witnessed by the presence there in glory of our Forerunner himself. Can that heart be tuned to praise which is taught its need of a daily absolution from the lips of another? Can such a soul sing, in the Spirit and with the understanding, psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? Can an unpurged conscience praise? Such things are impossible. For is not the very act of worship regarded as a duty required by God, and so rendered under a sense of law, instead of a blessed privilege arising from the perception and enjoyment of mercy from everlasting to everlasting? The apostle teaches us to give "thanks to him who hath made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col 1:1-29) This shows the true ground of thanksgiving and praise to be what grace has accomplished

for us in Christ. But if this is not seen and remembered, worship must become a burden instead of our highest privilege. And do we not see that Christians regard the teaching and preaching with which God blesses them far more highly than worship? This is a sure consequence of not remembering the sanctuary in which we worship. Let the soul realize this, and it will instantly perceive what are its grounds of praise, and what the character of its worship. But if a worldly sanctuary is established, or the order of a worldly sanctuary is introduced, our worship must be degraded, and our souls become lean. Such results must ensue if we take for our pattern the worldly sanctuary, instead of by faith, and as led of the Spirit, entering into that which is heavenly. There all is done there we have subject for praise only.

## 01.07. A High Priest of Good Things to Come

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A High Priest of Good Things to Come.

Heb 9:1-28.

It would indeed tend greatly both to comfort and elevate our souls, if we realized the unclouded prospect before us. That which is before us is alone proper to us as redeemed to God by the blood of the Lamb, and as born of God. The present, whether sorrowful or pleasant, is only to be regarded as the times that pass over us, or through which we have to go as we are on the way to our entering into our rest. The present good things and evil things are alike to faith old things which have passed away, because faith is the substance of things hoped for. And the things hoped for are alone substantial, permanent, unshaken, and satisfying. Every desire of good which man is seeking to realize now, the saint knows can alone be realized when Jesus is manifested in glory with his saints. He has to calculate on disappointment in all circumstances, while he most blessedly learns that hope in the Lord in the midst of all circumstances never disappoints. Often indeed, in his pilgrimage through present things, will he have to say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?* But still, he knows in whom he has believed, and can say, "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." But whilst there is the cheering thought of God's commanding his loving-kindness in the day-time, yet the soul is stayed by the prospect of the uninterrupted light of God's countenance — by the prospect, not of occasional, but of uninterrupted, praise. The true spirit of worship would lead us on into this holy scene. Our present privileges are only ours now, because of what the grace of God has made us to be before him. God calleth things that are not as though they were. Sons before him in Christ, and predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, we have the spirit of sons now. Kings and priests unto God, because washed already in the blood of Jesus, we have the spirit of praise given to us now. Hence it is the things which are to come with which we have to do. If we speak of the world, it is the world to come of which we speak; that is, our world, the world subjected to us, and blessed by us. We know the present world as being given into other hands, and therefore it is only the scene of our trial. If we speak of man, and of God being well-pleased in men, we speak of him that is to come, of whom Adam was a type. (Rom 5:14.) If we speak of "good things," they are not the good things in this life, but good things to come. There is "the evil to come," out of which the righteous are taken; there are the good things to come, which the righteous enjoy. The rich man might remember, that he in his lifetime had his good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. And there might have been even thankfulness for the good things; but there was no enjoyment of God — no real worship of him as far above all the blessings he had given. This is the real spirit of worship, even when in the actual possession of all that God can give; yea, when glorified ourselves, to be able to see in God, and own in him, something far more blessed than anything that we have or can have, and to find the knowledge of him, and the enjoyment of him, to be indeed the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore.

We find the worship of Israel based upon God's accomplished faithfulness in their enjoyment of present good things. This was prescribed for them of God in the wilderness, but it only took effect in the land. Israel, as God's constituted worshipping people, had to do with the priest in questions of sin, both in the wilderness and in the land; but the joy of worship was not known by them whilst they were in the wilderness. It was thus the ordinance ran: "And it shall be when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day, unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God."

Here we have Israel's profession — the profession of the grace which had brought him into the present possession of the land, and of the enjoyment of the fruits of it. We have also the priest of Israel's profession, not occupied about details of sin, but more happily occupied in presenting the thanksgiving of the worshipper in the basket of first-fruits, before the altar of the Lord. This must have been the priest's most blessed service. Next comes the confession of the worshipper: "And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt . . . and the Lord hath brought us into this place, and given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee." (Deu 26:1-11.)

How blessedly was the soul led of God to worship and joy. There was no element of law here, but only the thought of grace. The sense of personal unworthiness only tending to the magnifying the grace of God which had regarded the affliction and oppression of the poor destitute. Redemption ascribed solely to the power of God, and not only known as deliverance from present misery, but as introduction into present blessing. And then the blessings actually enjoyed leading on still to the acknowledgment of God who had given them. And now I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given, me." This is the true spirit of worship. The soul is led from the blessings enjoyed, to him who is blessed for evermore; from the gift to the Giver. The joy will not be less in the gift, because there is the acknowledgment of the Giver. "Thou shalt worship before the Lord thy God" — this is the first thing; and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee. The spirit of false worship is to rejoice in the work of one's hands — "They made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands." But in true worship, God himself is the glory of the worshipper; it is in him that the soul makes her boast. There could not be an ordinance of more joy to Israel than this of the basket of first-fruits: this profession was indeed a blessed one, and the coming to the priest on such an occasion must have expanded their hearts with thankfulness. But now the Great High Priest is passed into the heavens. And whilst his service there meets all our present necessities, his priesthood connects our souls with good things to come. And we coming to him by faith now are enabled to make our profession, and to present our basket of first-fruits, and to worship before the Lord, and to rejoice. It was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob, to sing aloud

unto God their strength; and is it not equally our statute and the law of our God unto us, to "rejoice evermore"? But then we must worship before the Lord first. We must be in the attitude of worshippers, in order to be able to rejoice before the Lord, and rejoice in his own blessings.

First, we have our profession connected with priesthood. Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Our worship is based on our profession, and our profession is maintained by the priesthood of Jesus. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." It is indeed a lofty profession that we make. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." This is our profession now. Glory will be the actual exercise of that which grace has made us to be. "By grace we are saved." Before God we stand as his own grace has made us; not as we know ourselves to be in our actual circumstances. We are even now blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. It is the Spirit alone which makes us to know, and gives us to enjoy, these blessings here, which are freely given us of God. We are not in the inheritance which God has made ours, but we have the Holy Spirit of promise as the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of promise, and Jesus is the High Priest of good things to come. The Holy Spirit comforts now by showing "things to come," such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. But when we look to Jesus, we see him already entered into the good things, and entered there for us. It is one of the good things to come, that the world to come is to be subject to Christ and his saints. We do not yet see all things subject to him, but we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, on account of suffering death, crowned with glory and honour. It is thus that his exaltation maintains us in the profession that we shall judge the world. "God commands all men to repent," upon the ground that he is about to judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." As risen, he is to judge the world in righteousness; but he has tasted death for us, and as risen too, we shall reign with him, and order this world in righteousness. What a solemn joy would the spirit of real worship afford to the soul, if it were thus connected with coming good things! It would exalt, it would sanctify, at the very time the soul was owning its absolute dependence on grace. "A Syrian ready to perish" would be the real expression of that soul. A sinner dead in trespasses and sins, quickened by God's grace, and brought into union with Christ, would never forget his own previous condition, and would gladly remember it, to ascribe worthiness to him alone to whom it is due. "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and made us kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." To be actually in the sanctuary before God is one of the good things to come. But hope carries us there now, because Jesus the forerunner is there for us already entered. We are exhorted to hold fast "the profession of our hope without wavering." Our hope is actually to be where Jesus is for us now. But in spirit we can worship as being there, because Jesus is there for us; he is a High Priest of good things to come. It is that which we hope for which stamps our character on us. It is so in man — the object he aims at gives the mould to his character. And this is most blessedly true of the saint. "It hath not been yet manifested what we shall be, but this we know, that when he [Jesus] shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every one that hath this hope in him [i.e. Jesus] purifieth himself, even as he is pure." If there be hesitation in our souls as to the accomplished work of Christ, that he has

by himself purged our sins; if we consider not the High Priest of our profession as exercising his ministry for us as already brought nigh to God by the blood he hath shed, so that our hope be pardon and acquittal rather than glory, it will stamp its character on our worship, and make it cold and distant. Neither shall we see the purification of the sanctuary as our purification, but shall be content with the standard of conventional righteousness. How deeply important is it to recognize our profession as a profession of hope, and to own the priesthood of Jesus, not only as meeting all present failure, but as enabling us to maintain our profession of things hoped for! We can, and we ought to, come before God as those who can now say, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest it. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places: yea, I have a goodly heritage." This is our basket of first-fruits; for faith is the substance of things hoped for. Jesus, as risen and ascended now, knows the path of life; he knows that in God's presence there is fulness of joy; he already knows the pleasures at God's right hand for evermore; for it is there he is exalted. But he knows them for us. He is a High Priest to us of these good things to come. Our blessing is to consider him.

Mansions in the Father's house is the most blessed portion of the saint's good things to come. They have not come unto them now; in this sense they are not come into the land. But Jesus, the Son, is in the Father's house, and he comforts us by telling us that there is room there for us as well as for him. He is preparing a place for us, and will come again and receive us to himself, that where he is we may be also. But the great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, is passed into the heavens for us, and presents us as sons; and in the spirit of sons, because he is there, we worship him now. How blessed is this. God would not have us to wait till we are manifested sons, in order to enter on our happy worship of the Father; but whilst we are sons only in hope, by having the spirit of sons given to us, and having Jesus the Son before God, we can cry, Abba, Father, even now. How truly are we saved by hope. How needful is it now for our soul's strength and joy, to have Jesus for us in heaven, and the Holy Spirit in us here, that we might both hold fast our profession, and use it now in holy worship. We know what it is, because of having the first-fruits of the Spirit, to groan within ourselves, and these painful groanings would hinder the maintenance of our profession; but then Jesus is on high for us, and we only wait his coming forth to be manifested in all that which we profess already to have received. Then we shall have, not only the spirit of adoption, but the adoption itself — standing in our own proper place as sons, even in fully manifested heavenly glory. We anticipate this place now, because Jesus the Son of God is passed into the heavens, and when the good things to come are actually ours in possession and enjoyment, our worship will still be in him and through him. We know so painfully the need of Jesus as the High Priest that can have compassion on the ignorant and those that are out of the way, that our souls little reach forth to the good things to come, so as to give its high and cheering character to our worship. He stoops down to our necessities and washes our feet; but how little do we consider him as the High Priest of our profession, and all the good things to come which that profession involves. It is one sad mark of declension, that this very word profession has become of such equivocal signification. It is often taken to imply that we are not in truth what we profess to be. But it is a blessed word. All that God by his grace has made us to be in Christ, which will only be manifested in glory, we profess to be now; and the priesthood of Jesus enables us to maintain our profession. All the good things which he by his grace has given to us, God reveals to us by his Spirit now, and therefore we worship God in the spirit now, on the very ground of being already blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. We wait not to be blessed,

we are already blessed. All that God has made Christ to be unto us, unseen, unmanifested, and only taught the soul by God himself, we take up now, and say, Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. Our profession involves all that we are in Christ, all that Christ is unto us, and all the good things that God has prepared for them that love him. Surely we have a basket of first-fruits indeed to bring now to the Priest to present to the Lord. And is it not often so in the season when the soul first has known liberty? Has there not been the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness? and the soul has said, Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. But we often forget them and when the soul comes to be exercised in the truth before God, proving what sin really is, when it becomes acquainted with the deceitfulness as well as the desperate wickedness of the heart, the joy is frequently turned into mourning. But here it is that we find peculiarly the value of Christ as the High Priest of good things to come. Whilst the soul is learning experimentally the need of his present ministry in meeting present failure, how blessedly is it led on through the priesthood of Jesus to the time of undisturbed worship and of unhindered praise before God. No sin will there be then to confess, but only praise for mercy and grace accomplished in glory. This is the value of his being the High Priest of good things to come, that even now it can be said to us, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, making confession in his name." "I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth;" for in the midst of our changeableness, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

## **02.00. Law and Grace - Notes of Lectures on Galatians**

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Law and Grace — Notes of Lectures on Galatians by J.L. Harris Lecture 1. Gal 1:1-24.

Lecture 2. Gal 2:1-21.

Lecture 3. Gal 3:1-20.

Lecture 4. Gal 3:21-29; Gal 4:1-20.

Lecture 5. Gal 4:21-31; Gal 5:1-13.

Lecture 6. Gal 5:13-26, Gal 6:1-18.

## 02.01 Lecture 1. Galatians 1.

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Lecture 1. Gal 1:1-24.\* The epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians both treat of the same great subject, namely, the way of a sinner's justification before God. There is, however, an important difference between the two epistles. In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle states what the gospel really is — the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, because therein is the righteousness of God revealed in the way of faith. But in the epistle to the Galatians, he had to do with those who, having received the gospel of the grace of God, had attempted to unite with the gospel the works of the law, and by this very means to nullify the gospel. Hence we find much sternness in this epistle; and on no other occasion does St. Paul so strongly assert his apostolical authority.

"Paul, an apostle, (not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;) and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:1-3) The apostle was not sent forth from men, neither did he receive his commission from men. He here insists on the speciality of his apostleship. Unlike the twelve, his commission was direct from the risen Jesus. It came fresh from heaven after Jesus had finished His work; as the apostle himself states to the elders of Ephesus, "That I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." God seems to have anticipated the fiction of the present day, by breaking any semblance of apostolic succession, in His manner of choosing the apostle Paul.

Fellowship in labour, and especially labour in the truth of the gospel, was very precious to the apostle; he therefore associates the brethren with himself, as sharing their perfect sympathy and concurrence with him in what he here states. Galatia was a large province, in which there were several congregations of Christians, and he directs his epistle to the churches of Galatia. In Act 16:6, the first mention is made of the apostle visiting Galatia, and in Act 18:23, we find him going through Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. Peter also addresses "the strangers scattered throughout Galatia." This is the only instance in which the apostle addresses the several churches of a province; his other epistles, except those to individuals, are addressed to the one church in a particular city. The mode of apostolic address in the several epistles, and the manner in which the apostle asserts his office, are well worthy of consideration. In the epistle to the Philippians, he does not assert his apostleship at all, taking, as I believe, the higher title, in his estimation, of servant of Jesus Christ.

"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father." (Gal 1:4.) This verse really contains the whole subject of the epistle. Such is the way of Paul's teaching; he introduces the subject in a very summary manner, and amplifies it afterwards. What has law to do with those for whom Jesus has given Himself to rescue them out of this present evil world? For believers to have recourse to the law is to go back into the world, out of which Christ gave Himself to deliver them. This is of practical importance.

There are many who need quite as much now to be rescued out of traditional Christianity, as the Galatians needed to be rescued out of idolatry. How many things have we all received from tradition, and not from the Word of God. We cannot hold to the Scriptures and tradition; the authority of the one will necessarily supersede the authority of the other. Adherence to the Scriptures will make us relinquish tradition; a clinging to tradition will make the Word of God of none effect. "Christ gave Himself for our sins." If I believe in substitution, I see that the Lord Jesus has stood in my place, and that I am thereby, according to the will of our God and Father, "delivered [or rescued] out of this present world."

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel which is not another but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal 1:6-7) The apostle ministered the gospel of the grace of God; and arduous was his labour, and sore his trials, in seeking to preserve its purity. Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, he could see the truth of the gospel imperilled, where others could see no harm. If we put devotedness in service, or the best of good works, as supplementary to the work of Christ, it is no gospel at all. It was certain men that believed which said "it was needful to circumcise the Gentiles, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." (Compare Acts 11:1-30 and Acts 15:1-41) It was peril not from without, but rising up in the very bosom of the Church. The fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles may well be called the Christian's Magna Charta. These teachers said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." The gospel is independent of these 'ifs' and 'excepts.' If they are introduced, they subvert the gospel of the grace of God. The apostle James, in this chapter of the Acts, teaches the same truth as Paul in this epistle, namely, that the attempt to add any thing to the finished work of Christ, as the ground of acceptance with God, is to "trouble the brethren," and to "subvert their souls." It is God who tells us how precious the work of Christ is to Him. He knows its value as we know it not. God sets forth the gospel as meeting all the need of the sinner; for if the omniscient God searches the heart and trieth the reins, the same God knows also the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and testifies of it to us. How easily may even a believer in Christ turn the gospel into no gospel, to the misery of himself as well as of others. The religion of Christendom is but the Galatian error in full manifestation; it has perverted the gospel of the grace of God, and substituted in its place a modified covenant of works.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal 1:8-10)

It is a solemn thought, that the apostle should speak thus of an angel. Angels heralded the birth of Jesus. Angels ministered to Him in the wilderness. An angel strengthened Him in His agony in Gethsemane. Angels were at His grave on the resurrection-morn, and announced the glad tidings, "He is risen." Angels relieved the bewildered men of Galilee, by the announcement, that the Jesus they had lost sight of should so come again, as they had seen Him go away. Jesus was seen of angels; but angels never tasted of His grace in redemption. They can see the virtue of His blood, and say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." But they cannot say, "Thou hast redeemed us to

God by thy blood." It is thus that a lost and ruined sinner is brought by redemption into greater nearness to God than an unfallen angel. And it is the experience of such amazing grace that makes one, comparatively ignorant in other respects, more sensitive as to the truth of the gospel, than the man of vast parts, or even than an angel, who has never tasted that grace. Is there such a sense among us of the value of the gospel? Is there such a jealousy for the truth of the gospel in our day? The jealousy of the apostle for the gospel was such, that he could say, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Will such faithfulness be pleasing to men? What says the apostle? "Do I now persuade men, or God?" that is, in using this language, am I seeking to approve myself to God or to men? The gospel cuts from under men every possible assumption. The denial of self must be the denial of self in every form — bad self, good self, religious self. This displeases men. Herein is the offence of the Cross. There is no occasion to affect singularity in preaching the gospel. It be preached simply and earnestly, and it is of itself sufficiently offensive, because it sweeps away all refuges of lies. It is a solemn word, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal 1:11-12)

We have had abundant experience, from the days of the apostle to the present day, of what the gospel would be "according to man." It would entirely frustrate the grace of God. The gospel is the expression of God's thoughts and ways to man as a convicted sinner, and His thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and ways. The most experienced Christians find it a constant battle and struggle to beat down their carnal thoughts, and to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. The thoughts of God toward us are thoughts of grace, love, and peace; but we often think of Him as a hard master and austere man. The apostle is exceedingly jealous on the point of having received his gospel directly from the glorified Jesus. When the Lord appeared to him in the way, He thus gave his commission, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee." (Acts 26:15-16) It was by direct revelation from the Lord that the apostle received his gospel; and we, too, need "the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Jesus." Even now God is pleased to "reveal to babes that which is hidden from the wise and prudent." And he who knows in his own case, that "where sin has abounded, grace has super-abounded," is in possession of the highest wisdom, even the wisdom of God.

"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." (Gal 1:13-14) In these verses Paul shows us that it must have been an extraordinary power which delivered him from his traditional religion, which made him think that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." He who had been so studiously instructed in Judaism needed the manifestation of something much more excellent to deliver him from his religion, "received by tradition from his fathers," and to show him its vanity and powerlessness. This is important. We often regard the gospel as a remedy to which perforce we must have recourse; but

Paul regarded it in comparison with a previous revelation of God, which indeed had its glory, but which faded away before the excelling glory of which he was a minister — "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The most accomplished and zealous religionist, and the chief of sinners, found their identity in Saul of Tarsus, when he saw himself in the light of the glory of Jesus. And so it ever must be. However sincere we may have been in our religious convictions, if they have not been according to God, but according to tradition, we are awakened to the discovery, in the light of God's truth, that in the very thing on which we most prided ourselves, we were most contrary to God. "Men," says the Lord Himself, "will think they are doing God service, by putting you to death." The greatest opposers of the doctrines of grace are those who receive their religion from tradition, and not from the Word of God.

"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." (Gal 1:15-17.) In Gal 1:15, the apostle seems to allude to Jer 1:5 : "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Paul was made an apostle of the Gentiles by as distinct an act of God's sovereign power, as Jeremiah was appointed a prophet to the Gentiles. God called both one and the other, without any previous training, to their respective ministries; the one denouncing God's wrath on the Gentiles, the other preaching peace to them through Jesus Christ. But the call of the apostle by the grace of God was accompanied by an inward revelation of the glory of the Son to his soul. There was indeed an outward revelation which affected others as well as himself: his companions "fell to the earth" (Act 26:4), as well as himself; they were "speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." But however they might be affected and astonished; whatever might have been wrought in them subsequently, at that time it pleased God to reveal His Son in Paul alone. It is one of the cravings of men's hearts, "to see signs and wonders;" but there is nothing saving in such manifestations; yea, rather the revelation of the Lord Jesus in glory, without any inward revelation to the soul, will be the world's judgment. But now the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested to some in the world, without being manifested unto the world. "The world seeth Him no more, but they see Him." This is an essential distinction between the Church and the world. The Church, by the presence of the Holy Ghost, now delights in an unseen object, even Jesus, and loves His appearing, that she may see Him as He is, and be with Him for ever. The world indeed shall see Him, but only to hear its own doom from His lips. The traditional religion of Saul the Pharisee gave way before this inward revelation. He saw its profitlessness, and, instead of being gain, he could only regard it as loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. He did not "confer with flesh and blood;" for he had the witness in himself, in the blessed suitability of Jesus the crucified, but now risen and glorified one, to his need. It is ever dangerous to confer with flesh and blood concerning that which God has revealed. This we see to be the case in another apostle. The Father, not flesh and blood, had revealed to Peter the glory of the Person of Jesus but Peter conferred with flesh and blood, and reasoned against so glorious a Person as the Son of the living God having to suffer. How differently does he speak when, led of the Holy Ghost, he says, "Christ has also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God." The first thoughts of faith are right. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; he conferred with flesh and blood, but what sorrow and trouble he brought on himself in the matter of Hagar.

And so with regard to ourselves; we receive God's testimony concerning His Son Jesus Christ, and find peace with God as our portion; but we are tempted to confer with flesh and blood; we demand, as it were, evidences from ourselves, which prove not satisfactory to ourselves, instead of resting on the evidence of God to us in the gift and work of His Son, in all its suitability to meet our need. No evidence we can produce from ourselves can ever be satisfactory, because it must ever be accompanied with the consciousness of imperfection, and the soul can find refuge only in that which is perfect, and complete, and finished. Such is the work of Christ on the Cross; and on this God Himself calls us to repose with confidence. The moment we confer with our intellect, we get darkness to our souls.

Paul did not go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him, to get either confirmation to the truth of the gospel, or their authority for preaching it; he had received both directly from the risen Jesus; but he went into Arabia, into the desert. He needed privacy, to be alone with God, in order to digest the wonderful truth he had received. This is worthy of note for us all, but especially for young converts who may be tempted to court publicity when they need retirement. From the wilderness Paul goes not to Jerusalem, but returns again to Damascus — the place of His wonderful conversion.

"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me." (Gal 1:18-24) The more we trace Paul's steps, after the Lord appeared to him in the way, the more shall we understand the gospel of that grace which he preached, and delighted to preach. And sad indeed is it for those who preach the gospel to others, if they taste not its grace as often as they preach it. The glorious gospel of the blessed God, the more it is known, the more must it be delighted in.

Now these personal incidents in Paul's history, brought so solemnly before us in Gal 1:20, are certainly intended to teach us the nature of the gospel which he preached. Paul, a proficient disciple, both of the law and the traditions men had added to it, shows us in his person that the grace of God, in the revelation of His Son in him, had delivered him from that which was his former boast. How entirely, therefore, must law and gospel be opposed to each other.

Again, he studiously kept away for some years from Jerusalem, which might be regarded as the great religious centre, to show that he got nothing from thence. And when he did go to Jerusalem to visit Peter, it was not to get authority from the apostles, but to have fellowship in labour with them. The marked manner in which Paul speaks of himself, as having persecuted the church, tends to show us himself as a specimen or pattern man of what the grace of the gospel could effect. If he preached the gospel of the grace of God to others, he could ever point to himself as the roaring lion, changed, by the revelation. of the Lord Jesus in him, into a lamb. And he saw in others who received his gospel what others saw in him — an elect vessel of mercy, and gave the glory to God of their conversion, as others glorified God in him.

## 02.02 Lecture 2. Galatians 2.

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Lecture 2. Gal 2:1-21. The apostle still refers to his own personal history, as affording the most decisive evidence that he himself did not in any wise look to the law for righteousness.

"Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." (Gal 2:1-2) In the brief and rapid notice of Paul's history after his conversion, in the Acts of the Apostles, Titus is not mentioned as being in company with the apostle, although Barnabas is named (Act 9:26-28) as the one who introduced him to the other apostles, and "declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way." The apostle "went up by revelation." God's time had now come for him to go up there. Had he gone up at the instant of his conversion, it might have been argued that he went there to receive authority from them which were "apostles before him." God has not only His ways with His servants, but "our times are in His hands." That which may be right and fitting at one time would be unseasonable at another. Paul went up to Jerusalem with confidence, because he went up under direct Divine guidance; and he went as an equal to them which were apostles before him, not to receive any thing from them, save their hearty fellowship, which he prized; but to communicate to them that gospel which he had received "by revelation," and which he preached among the Gentiles, lest there should be even the semblance that there were two gospels, and so his labour would be in vain. When God teaches, and by His teaching leads a sinner to Jesus, He wants no confirmation from others. "He that believeth on Jesus sets to his seal that God is true." Taught by the Holy Ghost Himself, that he is ruined, lost, and undone, and that his only refuge is in Jesus, he has the witness in himself. He finds the suitability of Christ's work to his actual condition as a sinner, and wants no confirmation from others.

"But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: and that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." (Gal 2:3-5)

Titus did not accompany the apostle by chance to Jerusalem; but under the ordering of God. He was led there to furnish a convincing proof, that nothing must be added to faith in Christ Jesus in order to salvation. The apostle resisted the circumcision of Titus, and yet he allowed the circumcision of Timothy. (Act 16:1-3.) The cases of these two individuals are apparently similar, yet the apostle's conduct in relation to them is very different. In this difference of action is involved a principle, the violation of which has been the fruitful source of division in the Church of God, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing;" it is a matter indifferent in itself; but the moment an attempt is made to impose it, peremptory resistance must be made, lest the liberty of the gospel be infringed, or conscience towards God be wounded. In the present case it was "false brethren," not unbelieving Jews, who sought to impose circumcision, and thus to Judaize the

gospel. How successful the efforts of false brethren have been in this direction since the eagle eye of the apostle to discern the real principle at work, and the direct authority of God to crush the attempt has been removed, the present state of Christendom plainly declares. Even in this very land, it is the violation of this principle, two hundred years ago, which has rent the Church into various denominations. Paul resisted the false brethren, because "the truth of the gospel" was imperilled. Had he yielded, the way would have been opened for one condition upon another, till often the poor believer would come to regard the gospel of liberty as if it were a heavy yoke. For the sake of avoiding needless offence to the Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy but to preserve the liberty of the gospel, he sternly resisted the efforts of "false brethren" to have Titus circumcised. "There were," as Peter says, "false prophets among the people," there shall be false teachers among you and it is "false teachers" who have corrupted the gospel, and "false brethren" brought into bondage by them, which have produced that which passes under the name of Christianity, and which effectually obscures the gospel of the grace of God. If any attempt to impose upon us a matter of indifference as necessary to salvation, or, as a term of communion, it must be resisted, in order that the authority of man may not supersede the authority of Christ but gracious yielding, even in matters of our own liberty, is a part of that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. (1Co 8:13)

There were false brethren in the apostle's days. What must it be now? Then it was the exception to find among the guests a man without a wedding garment on. The tares and the wheat have grown on together, and they are so alike, that only one eye can accurately discern the difference. The world has become a great tare-field; false brethren predominate, persons not true to the Lord Jesus, though bearing His name. In the days of the apostle, such false brethren allowed that Jesus was the Messiah, but acknowledged Him in a carnal way and sanctioned their Judaism by His name. And now they have their temples, priest, sacrifices, and offerings, all which have the tendency to undermine the truth of the gospel, and to take believers off from the security they have in Christ Jesus, against which the powers of hell cannot prevail. This blessed doctrine is unpalatable, because, if salvation be certain, it must be independent of man, and wholly of God. Assurance is the property of the believer in the Lord Jesus it is God's certainty, not ours.

"But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: but contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." (Gal 2:6-10)

"God accepteth no man's person:" a hard saying. Who can hear it? Peter had to learn it by a distinct revelation from heaven (see Acts 10:1-48); Paul, by kicking against the pricks till subdued by the grace of God. And we have to learn the same lesson under God's hand. It is neither personal qualification, nor the things we do, nor official character, which God regards; but that which His own grace makes any to be in Christ, and the gift He of His sovereign will confers on any. "A man can receive [take unto himself] nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Nothing

could be added to this. Paul had received a commission directly from heaven, and however it might be the joy of Peter, James, and John to acknowledge the grace and the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ to this elect vessel of mercy, they dared not attempt to add any thing unto it, or to come in between the Master and His servant. Let a man have all the credentials which human authority can confer, if he has not received grace and ability from God to preach His gospel, he is not to be accredited as a minister of Christ. He cannot preach that which he does not know himself. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2Co 5:18) Those who were apostles before Paul readily and gladly recognized, that the same God who so effectually wrought in the ministry of Peter unto the Jews, now wrought as effectually in the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles; and those who were esteemed pillars cheerfully gave the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas; thus testifying that, though in different lines, they were serving one common master — fellow-builders in God's building — fellow-labourers in God's husbandry. Nothing was more dear to him, who had learnt at his conversion that Christ and His Church were one, than to bring about a practical exhibition of this oneness in the happy fellowship of believers among the Jews and among the Gentiles; and for this the apostle of the Gentiles himself thought it not beneath his office to be the bearer, in conjunction with others, of a certain contribution made among the richer Gentile believers for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." (Gal 2:11-13) The truth of the gospel was not only imperilled by "false brethren," who would fain undermine its liberty, but likewise by the conduct of that apostle, to whom it had been distinctly revealed, that he was not to consider a Jew more clean than a Gentile. When God is the cleanser, and the blood of Jesus the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, all therein washed are equally clean before God. Peter's walk, in the instance here mentioned, was not upright according to the truth of the gospel. Paul withstood him to the face, because in this respect he was blameworthy. Regard for persons, and for his traditionary religion, furnished the occasion for Peter's characteristic weakness to show itself. He had, in freely associating with the Gentile believers, shown how entirely he recognized that God was no respecter of persons, and what God had cleansed he dared not call unclean. But when some brethren came from Jerusalem, with their thoughts full of Jewish privileges, Peter must either, for the sake of their company, turn his back on the Gentiles, or be content to bear their sneers by continuing to associate with the Gentiles. It needed twenty-five years for Abraham to get at the bottom of the unbelief lurking in his heart (Gen 20:1-18); and it needed also much discipline to teach Peter where his danger lay. And so of us all. "The fear of man bringeth a snare;" and those who in one company have faithfully confessed Christ, have in another, through fear of man, denied Him. That great truth, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," is strikingly illustrated in our day, by the moral impossibility of fellowship between the truth of the gospel and traditionary religion. How many, too, as Barnabas, honest believers in heart in the truth of the gospel, are yet, because they seek honour of men, afraid to avow it. Grace is indeed a mighty leveller; it assumes that there is no difference, because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; neither is there any difference, as to standing before God, between those who, through His grace, are justified freely through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

How many who shrink from hypocrisy, by pretending to be what they are not, still fall into it in another way, by not avowing what the grace of God has made them to be according to the truth of the gospel. Such was the dissembling of Barnabas, "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." And let none of us, after reading such instances, think ourselves proof against failure; but rather take to ourselves the word, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

"But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (Gal 2:14-18)

It may appear to us very strange, that the act of taking a meal with certain persons should invalidate the truth of the gospel. But the most important principles often hinge on an act very insignificant in itself. And it was so here. Had the blood of Jesus cleansed the Gentile believers with a cleansing which all the Jewish rites might shadow forth, but could not effect? Had God put upon them a righteousness, to the dignity of which legal righteousness could not pretend? Then to refuse intercourse with these Gentiles on the ground of ceremonial uncleanness, in order to please the Jews, was verily to, undermine the truth of the gospel. But the apostle adduces what both Peter and himself had been by God's grace compelled to do, to show the wrongness of Peter's then course. "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." This again is a hard saying. No one is a Christian by nature. He may be born of Christian parents, brought up under Christian discipline, and adhere to Christian ordinances; but unless he be born of God, all such external privileges avail him nought. Here is the real point: how few ask themselves — Am I in Christ? Now the Jew had natural hereditary privileges. He was born a Jew, and the Jews were "children of the kingdom," "children of the prophets," "children of the covenant;" but they were cast out. "A Jew by nature" had, therefore, a certain privileged standing above a Gentile by nature. The Gentile was an alien from the commonwealth of Israel; his only title, "sinner of the Gentiles." How hard it is to take our place as those who can prefer no claim on God, and can adoringly rejoice that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. But the argument of the apostle is very cogent. "We, the children of the kingdom and of the prophets, have been forced to cast ourselves on Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; because by the works of law shall no flesh be justified." No flesh; it is a very comprehensive term, and may be taken either morally, intellectually, or religiously. The case in point is the religious Jew, under God's own law, forced to seek deliverance from under it by faith in Christ. Peter himself takes precisely the same line of argument in the memorable council (Acts 15:1-41) as Paul does here. "But we (i.e. Jews by nature) believe, that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (sinners of the Gentiles). At Antioch Peter was acting as though Gentiles were to be saved by Judaizing. At Jerusalem, his testimony is, that Jew and Gentile stand on one common level. Both Peter and Paul must be condemned as transgressors, if, after preaching faith in Christ, because the law could not justify, they built it up again in order to justification. They must

have been wrong at the outset in preaching Christ at all, if the law could justify. If Christ had not done all that was needful to put away sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness, so that the believer can stand in holy confidence in God's presence, what has He done at all? Dare we make the law supplementary to Christ, and thus take from the glory of Christ being the only salvation of God? The language of the apostle is very strong; but so also is the legal tendency of all our hearts. We shudder at the thought of making Christ the minister of sin; yet what are we doing, if we build again the very thing from which we fled, viz, the law, in order to be saved or helped by it? We are, by our own act in so doing, constituted transgressors; for we ought never to have left it at all. Grace and law, as the ground of our salvation, cannot stand together; the resting on the one must be the giving up of the other.

"For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Gal 2:19-21) The apostle in this passage, as he does also in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, turns from 'we' to 'I.' This change is not without its significance. The greatest proficient under the law was taught by the strong hand of God Himself, that all the law could do for him was to kill him. In that singular and strange passage in the life of the apostle, when "he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink;" convinced of the glory of Jesus, yet not having received forgiveness of sin in His name, it may be, his whole previous life passed before him. And what was the law in which he boasted, and the righteousness which he vainly thought he had thereby, now that he knew the law in its spirituality — now that "the commandment came" to his conscience in its true light? It was "ministration of death." The very law to which he looked for life, struck him dead as to all expectations from it and unless that law was removed out of the way, he could not live unto God. All his past life he had lived unto himself. And such is the spirit of legalism, if in conscience we get under law, we live to ourselves, and not unto God. In the true doctrine of the Cross, we learn the double lesson, that all are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ;" and "that we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we are held." The law kept men away from God, instead of bringing them near to God. And what are the questions of the day, about altars and priests, but a return to the law, and an attempt to keep sinners from drawing near to God, upon the assumption, that some have a standing of nearness to God which others have not. All believers are brought equally near to God by the blood of Christ. In this respect, there is no difference between Paul and the most ignorant of his disciples. But such questions are only satisfactorily settled by the true doctrine of the Cross of Christ. The more we enter into that doctrine, the more trivial and childish do such questions appear. The apostle Paul adduces his own experimental acquaintance with the doctrine of the Cross, as the most complete answer to the legalist: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." The doctrine, which the apostle Paul teaches so lucidly in Rom 6:1-23, he here shows to be the life of his own soul. He regards himself to have judicially died, when Christ was crucified. That act was perfect and complete; so that he could say, "I am crucified with Christ;" just as he taught in the epistle to the Romans: "Our old man is crucified with Him." The doctrine of the apostle Peter is essentially the same: "Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." The great point is, to fully recognize the judicial act

of God in the death of Christ. Faith recognizes that which God has wrought; and the sinner, looking unto Jesus on the Cross as his surety, sees death, as the wages of sin, inflicted by the hand of God on his Divine Surety; so that death in its penal character is to him abolished. Yea, he can regard himself as having already passed through it, saying with the apostle, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." Is then Saul the Pharisee alive from the dead? Not so. "Our old man is crucified with Him." Saul the Pharisee, with all his religious accomplishments, as well as with all his sins, has come to his end in the Cross of Christ, and a new man is risen up in his stead. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." "Not I." How deeply had Paul learned to set self aside, because he realized that God had set it aside in the Cross. But "whatever God doeth, He doeth for ever; nothing can be added to it, nothing taken from it." "His work is perfect." This is our rest. God has done it. But for ourselves while down here, it must be a continuous effort to set self aside; and this is our trial. To know Christ's finished work for us is one thing, and when that is well realized, it follows almost as a necessary consequence, that we must take up the Cross and deny self. "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul had made a blessed exchange — self for Christ. Christ was his substitute on the Cross; and now he says, "Christ liveth in me." It is, therefore, a life which is death-proof — a life communicated from the risen Jesus, which death cannot touch. As this life has its source from above, so also its tendencies are to things in heaven. It is a new life, in the strictest sense of the word; not the old improved. Its struggles here are against the old life, in whatever form it may appear. It is spiritual life, in opposition to natural life. Hence the apostle adds, "The life which I now live in the flesh." It is lived in the flesh now, in a poor, groaning, earthy tabernacle; but it will not always be so lived. It will be lived in heaven, in a spiritual and glorified body, perfectly suited to it. Whilst in the flesh, this life has every thing to contradict it; but when in its own native home, it will indeed spring up, without hindrance, as a well of water, unto everlasting life. Even now, all its own tendencies are upward; it is only nourished by that which comes from heaven. Its meat and drink are heavenly; its worship, its priest, its temple, are in heaven; while the old life is occupied beneath with its worldly sanctuary and successional priesthood. Nothing so much hinders the tendencies of this life as the Jewish ritual, and Christian copies of it. "I live by the faith of the Son of God." "When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we be manifested with Him in glory;" but meanwhile, before we see Him as He is, we live by the faith of the Son of God. In His own emphatic words — "We eat Him, and live because of Him." And, as he that eats, eats for the nourishment of himself, and not another; so the believer appropriates Christ to himself. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." How blessedly does the apostle bring us to this great cardinal point; and if He has loved me, and given Himself for me, it is not assuredly for me to add the law to His perfect work, and thus to dim my perception of His perfect love. What strength is in the expression, "I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by law, then Christ has died in vain." And yet, if we look round and see what the Christian religion actually is, it falls under the heavy censure of frustrating the grace of God, and of making Christ to have died in vain. The thoughts of most Christians dwell only on forgiveness of sins; but, according to the gospel of the grace of God, however in theory we may divide them, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life are so essentially linked together, that he who has one has all. Christ on the Cross has not only made an end of sin, but brought in also everlasting righteousness. The great central point of attraction, set forth by God to a sinner, is Christ crucified. There He meets him at once, to supply all his need — forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and eternal life; so that any attempt to add the law to Christ is as dishonouring to the grace of God and the work of Christ, as it is

discouraging to the soul under the sense of sin. The gospel is not a system of negation, but of positive blessing. It brings to us every thing in the way of gift, and faith receives the gift which God gives. Every other gift is comprehended in the unspeakable gift of God — His own Son. How many, even real Christians, who would heartily repudiate the thought of any confidence in their own works, do not see their danger of frustrating the grace of God, by hesitating to receive what God is pleased to give.

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

## 02.03 Lecture 3. Galatians 3: 1-20.

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Lecture 3. Gal 3:1-20.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal 3:1-5)

There is scarcely a more interesting portion in St. Paul's writings than this, because it shows the peculiar fascination of the law on real believers. One form of the corruption of the gospel of the grace of God is the reducing it to a system of ordinances: this tendency showed itself in the Galatian churches, and the correction of it forms the subject of this part of the epistle. The apostle addresses the Galatians, as 'foolish,' just as our Lord did His disciples, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe."

There was folly in looking to the law for righteousness after they had known the grace of the gospel. The grace of the gospel had been presented to them most conspicuously in the doctrine of the Cross of Christ, but there was a 'bewitching' power which drew them off from the Cross, and made them turn to the law for righteousness. It was as though the law had set its eyes on them, like the snake on its victims, so that they were utterly powerless to get away from it. No language can more forcibly present to us what the law really is; whether moral or ceremonial, we need not enquire, for the Scripture regards the law as a whole. Some would fain add their own moral righteousness as a make-weight in the scale of their justification; others have recourse to a system of ordinances, to make up for the defect of moral righteousness; but, in either case, it is the fascinating power of law which prevents them from looking to Jesus Christ, as the object which God proposes for righteousness to every one that believeth. Again, how strong is the expression, "before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you." The publicity and prominence which the apostle gave to the doctrine of the Cross, was that of a proclamation set forth by authority in the most frequented parts of the city. Such appears to be the force of 'set forth.' Had the eye of the Galatians been fixed on the cross of Christ, they would not have turned to law for righteousness. When the doctrine of the Cross is set forth in all its stern truth, it is God's verdict against man's pretensions to wisdom, or righteousness, or strength; and it is this which makes that doctrine still offensive. But at the same time, the doctrine is full of comfort to those who know it; for it is the "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness." Did you, says the apostle, receive the Spirit, because you kept the law? or because you believed the testimony to the finished work of Christ? The Holy Ghost is the seal of God set on that perfectly finished work, that we may know the value which God has set on it. God will not set such a seal on any imperfect work or righteousness. But if He gave the Holy Ghost to them, it was in consequence of their complete cleansing by the blood of Jesus, and the perfect righteousness in

which they stood before God in Him. Beginning in such a blessed standing in the Spirit, they were so foolish as to think to better their standing by some works of their own. This is very instructive, because it so often characterizes a stage in the career of a believer. Ignorantly and unconsciously, it may be, after his first joy in the knowledge of Christ has been blunted, and he has lapsed into worldliness or carelessness, he seeks to recover the sense of security by some energies of his own, instead of seeing that the sense of security can only be had by standing in grace. He begins in the Spirit, acknowledges the true doctrine of the Cross, not only as that in which he finds remission of sins, but as that which has also taught him his own worthlessness; nevertheless, such is the fascinating power of law, he would fain be made perfect by the flesh, as the Galatians were attempting to do.

Again, they had been sufferers; but had they suffered because of their attempts to keep the law? No; but on account of their confession of Christ. Their heathen friends and relatives did not persecute them because they asserted that duties were to be regarded, but because of the exclusiveness of the doctrine of Christ, which would allow no goodness, strength, righteousness, or wisdom, but in His name. As to the apostle himself, had he been putting them under the law? did he minister the Spirit to them upon the ground of legal obedience, or of faith in Christ? He then refers to Abraham.

"Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal 3:6-9) In the epistle to the Romans, as well as in this epistle, the apostle refers to the history of Abraham. His history is given us at large in the Scriptures, as God's portrait of a believer. If the history of all believers were written by the Spirit of truth, we should find the same general outline as in the history of Abraham. "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Abraham stood before God not as a doer, but as a recipient of blessings, and depository of promises. And thus Abraham becomes the head and pattern of the family of faith. The language which the apostle uses is very remarkable, — "the Scripture foreseeing." He here invests the Scriptures of the Old Testament as with an attribute of God; and this shows the place which these Scriptures have in unfolding the counsels of God. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." A sinner of the Gentiles is justified before God, just in the same way as Abraham was, undertaking nothing, doing nothing, but receiving the testimony of God to what God Himself has done. It was indeed in the case of Abraham as to what God would do but "the promise which God made to the fathers, He has fulfilled the same, in that he has raised up Christ from the dead." Abraham believed God, and we believe the same God, who now testifies to what He has done in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The more simply we take God at His word, the more we resemble Abraham. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful [that is, with believing] Abraham."

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from

the curse of the law, being made a curse for us for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal 3:10-14) But if, instead of taking God at His word, by believing on His Son, and thus setting to our seal that God is true, we have recourse to legal works or legal ordinances for our justification, we immediately get off the ground of blessing, as being recipients of what God gives to us in Christ, as freely as He gave promises to Abraham, and we bring ourselves under the curse. This is a solemn thought that after hearing of the grace of Christ, any should be so fascinated by law as to bring themselves in so terrible a position. But so it is. That same Scripture which so blessedly preached the gospel to Abraham, as sternly says to all who put themselves under the law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." This Scripture cannot be broken. But the great professing body have so modified the grace of the gospel of God, so fettered it with conditions, and at the same time so pared down God's law to the level of human convenience, that they have become almost identified with the Galatian error, and, therefore, under the sentence of these solemn words. The law knows nothing of mercy. It takes its course. It is of no use to say, I believe that God gave the law, or even to approve of it. Have you continued in it? If not, you are under the curse. But the gospel pronounces this great oracle, "The just shall live by faith." As the apostle himself had said, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Those who live on their own graces get into an unhealthy state of soul. Neither our good works nor our graces are Christ. We cannot have faith in them. They may be evidences to others, but not to ourselves, who have the certain evidence of God's testimony to Christ. "The law is not of faith;" it is not answered by believing, but by doing. But you do answer God's testimony to the finished work of His Son; and rest your soul upon it by faith. It is well to notice the 'we,' 'ye,' 'us,' in this epistle. It was not Gentiles, but Israel, who were brought under law at Mount Sinai; and those who were under it needed Christ's work on the Cross to redeem them from under it; and yet these Gentiles were virtually putting themselves under the law. Paul knew what it was to be under the law, and knew the blessedness of deliverance from it. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Those who were under the law must needs be rescued from such a position, or they never could have confidence in God. Christ magnified the law, and made it honourable; not to impose it on sinners of the Gentiles, to bar their access to God, but to make a clear way for the outflowing of the riches of God's grace to them, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." God now meets sinners, not in the way of requirement, as under the law, but in the way of setting forth Christ "as a propitiation through faith in His blood." God Himself is preaching peace by Jesus Christ; so that the blessing comes as freely to those who believe, as it did to Abraham. There was no promise of the Spirit to those who were under the law; that promise was connected with faith, and was made good in consequence of Christ having glorified the Father, and finished the work He had given Him to do; for the Holy Spirit came down in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus. It was not because they had kept the law, that Paul and other believing Jews received the Spirit, but because they believed in Jesus; they received "the promise of the Spirit through faith."

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which

was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Gal 3:15-18) The apostle proceeds to illustrate his doctrine by reference to an ordinary practice among men. If a man makes a will, and bequeaths certain legacies, absolutely and unconditionally, no one would allow an executor afterwards to impose conditions. "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto." We usually attach a legal sense to the word covenant; but it was no legal covenant that God made with Abraham, but absolute, unconditional promises, which God Himself covenanted to perform. But God's covenant had respect to Christ, Abraham's special Seed, in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen, unto the glory of God by those who believe. Receiving Christ by faith, therefore, we receive all the promises as absolutely and unconditionally as they were made to Abraham. Now, says the apostle, the law, which was given so long a time after the promises made to Abraham, cannot invalidate these promises: such a thing would not be allowed in a parallel case among men. The legacy, bequeathed absolutely and unconditionally, cannot be disturbed by any thoughts of the executor as to the fitness of the person to receive it. Just so, the New Testament may be regarded as the Will of the Lord Jesus. He gives a legacy, and is the Executor of His own Will, when He says, "Peace be unto you; and He showed the disciples His hands and His feet." He will not allow that which He has freely given to be disturbed by conditions afterwards imposed; because it would nullify promise altogether. "For if the inheritance be of law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." The word 'gave' in the original implies the idea of grace. The blessing, therefore, depends, not on the competence of man, but on the faithfulness of God. Will He who has promised revoke His promise? No; that is impossible. Abraham believed God, and so we, through Christ, believing on God, our faith and hope are in God.

"Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." (Gal 3:19-20). The question necessarily suggests itself, — "Wherefore then the law?" "It was added because of transgressions;" literally, for the sake of transgressions — that is, to make manifest to man himself what the sin was which God knew to be in him (see Rom 5:20); and to show man, if he had not a faithful promiser to undertake for him, and to fulfil all that was needed, he never could attain to blessing. The law itself proved, that man could not stand under it, and was necessary in order to vindicate the wisdom of God in promising blessing in Abraham's Seed; and was to continue till that "Seed should come to whom the promise was made." Thus, the law, instead of invalidating or superseding, tended to confirm the way of promise made known to Abraham, as the only possible way in which a sinner was or is capable of being blessed by God. The apostle adds — "It was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one." This is a passage of confessed difficulty, yet I think the leading thought may be gathered from it, and a blessed thought it is. God used the ministry of angels in giving the law, putting them between Himself and Israel, as Stephen testified, "who have received the law by the disposition of angels." This was a kind of mediation of distance; and distance from God characterized the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai. All the circumstances were those of terror, and the people were alarmed, and dared not hear the voice of God, but would have Moses receive the words direct from God which he might rehearse to them. There was Moses the mediator, as he tells them: "I stood between the Lord and you that time, to show you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went

not up into the mount." (Deu 5:5.) The mediation of Moses was to keep the Lord and the people apart — a mediator is not a mediator of one. The people were one party at Mount Sinai, and the Lord the other, and Moses stood between them. Such was the mediator of the law, the very opposite to the Mediator of the New Testament, which is to bring near and bring together, instead of keeping apart. Corrupt Christendom has followed the pattern of Moses, and, by a system of false mediation, whether the Virgin Mary, or angels, or an earthly priesthood, bars nearness of access to God; setting God and man in the same relative distance in which the law set them. Mediation connected with law, and mediation resulting from grace, are as opposite as possible, — distance characterizing the one, and reconciliation the other. There was no terror when the word of the Lord came to Abraham — no terror in the gracious words which proceeded from the lips of Jesus — no terror when the apostles went forth on the ministry of reconciliation, based on the mediation and finished work of Jesus. God is one. It is no longer two parties to be kept at a distance one from the other, lest destruction should ensue; but God preaching peace, God testifying to what He has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus, God Himself in the New Testament writing His laws in the heart, putting them in the mind, saying, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest; for I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." God is one; and therefore there is not a people in the new covenant undertaking to answer the requirements of God. But to turn from the gospel back to the law is to undertake, on our own responsibility, that which God promises to perform according to His own grace and faithfulness. Distance from God must be the necessary consequence. If you look for salvation to anything yet to be done on your part, instead of rejoicing in Christ Jesus and His finished work, you will become as these 'foolish' and 'bewitched' Galatians. In the old covenant, the people undertook; in the new covenant, God Himself hath undertaken. "God is one;" and therefore there can be no failure.

## 02.04 Lecture 4. Galatians 3: 21-29; Galatians 4: 1-20.

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Lecture 4. Gal 3:21-29; Gal 4:1-20.

"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Gal 3:21-22) The apostle having shown that there was no second party to the covenant into which God entered with Abraham, but that that covenant was an absolute and unconditional covenant, of the same character with the covenant which God made with Noah, and "his seed, and every living creature," and under which we now sow and reap; the question arises, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" Not so, says the apostle. Righteousness and life are inseparably connected together, both in the law and in the gospel. The law pointed to righteousness as the way to life. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." "This do, and thou shalt live." But the law could neither give life, nor righteousness. Such was the condition of man, that the holy, just, and good law of God, instead of being to man the ministry of righteousness, became the ministry of condemnation instead of the ministry of life, it was the ministry of death. The fault was not in the law, but in man. It could show man his sinfulness, impotence, and hopelessness; but it could do nothing for his deliverance. The law helped to force man out of the place of a doer, into that of a receiver. The law was given by Moses, but it could not give; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; and of that fulness 'do we receive.' It is a hard lesson to learn, that from beginning to end we are only receivers. We become Christians by that which we receive, not by any thing we do. We receive in the way of gift, and of the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, eternal life, even Christ Himself. The language of the apostle is remarkably strong as to the hopeless misery of man, whether without law or under law: "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin." Here sin is represented as a tyrant, keeping men in such bondage, that the very effort to deliver themselves only rivets their chains more firmly. But it is when this is really acknowledged to be man's condition, even that he is emphatically 'lost,' that light bursts in upon him; even that that which is "impossible with men, is possible with God" that which is impossible in the way of man's works, is possible in the way of faith. All are shut up hopelessly under sin, in order that the promise faith-wise in Christ Jesus might be given to them that believe. Those who thus were shut up under sin are now, by faith in Christ Jesus, made free from sin.

"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children [i.e. sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal 3:23-26)

If all are shut up in hopelessness under sin, the very law itself, to which men look for deliverance, takes the place of a jailor, as the very strength of sin, in order to make men conscious how entirely they were under the dominion of sin. They are alike 'shut up' under sin, and under the law. This

verse remarkably shows to us the necessary spirit of one quickened by the Holy Ghost, yet in his conscience under law. His spirit is and must be the spirit of bondage. He is "a prisoner of hope," craving liberty, yet not knowing how to get it. "Before faith came," means evidently that new and wondrous way of righteousness in the way of faith, and not in the way of works, now so clearly and fully manifested. The law kept even the saints who were under it, as it were, in jail. Look at Hezekiah. He was in bondage under fear of death, shut up in prison unto the faith that was afterwards to be revealed. It is in reference to saints of old in the condition of Hezekiah, that the Lord says to His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; for verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The apostle having regarded the law as a jailor, imprisoning those who are under it, in Gal 3:24 changes the figure, and presents the law as a schoolmaster, or rather as the confidential servant of the house, who conducted the youths to and from school, and watched over them in their games; and this, too, till they were emancipated from school, and were able themselves to take the place of men. This place the law had till Christ. It so strictly controlled those who were real saints, that they had no more liberty than the youth under the vigilant and strict care of a tutor. Just in proportion as saints dispensationally under the law rose above the law, looking to the faith, or the object of faith to be revealed, did they know liberty. Such there were even in the worst times: those who, "fearing the Lord, spake often one to another, and thought upon His name." Such there were, a faithful remnant, "when the fulness of time was come, and God sent forth His Son" — a Simeon or an Anna — waiting for the consolation of Israel, looking for redemption in Jerusalem. The Lord's own personal disciples never stood in conscious liberty till fully emancipated from the law. How different the state of the same disciples before and after Pentecost. When the Holy Ghost came down from heaven as the witness of Jesus in glory, and the witness of the preciousness of His blood as known in heaven, then they were free; they acted as those who were not servants, but sons. They were justified by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and were no longer under the rigid or even suspecting care of the tutor. They were grown up, come to man's estate, had attained their majority, and could enter into the enjoyment of their rich inheritance. It would have been more forcible, and more in keeping with the illustration, had the word rendered 'children' (Gal 3:26) been rendered 'sons,' not infants, but sons; those who had come into possession, and not merely into the title, of all their privileges. Now, after attaining to this standing and condition, to turn back to the law, would be to turn from the liberty of sons, who have access to the Father through Jesus, to the rigorous and irritating control of a tutor. How clearly does this illustrate the condition of many real Christians; still in their conscience they are under law, and not standing and acting in the liberty of sons of God. They make salvation a future object, instead of enjoying it as a present reality. And while this is the case, there will ever be the tendency to serve God and mammon, instead of walking in the happy consciousness of an emancipated people.

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise." (Gal 3:27-29)

How important is the doctrine of baptism, but how little understood or realized. The believer in Christ is regarded by God to have died in Christ, to have been buried with Christ, to be raised up with Christ, and to have put on Christ. Surely, if we have put on Christ, we need neither our works nor our service to commend us to God. The believer appears before God in that which he has put on — even Christ. This is the doctrine taught by baptism. All the differences and distinctions which exist in the human family are merged and lost in the one grand characteristic of the family of faith; they have put on Christ, and therefore are all one in Christ. In this marvellous distinction, difference of nation, Jew and Greek; difference of social condition, bond and free; difference even of sex, male and female, are lost in the paramount distinction — "all one in Christ Jesus." How full of comfort is this doctrine. The weak believer appears before God as the strong; the one who tremblingly touches the hem of the garment of Jesus has the same standing before God as the apostle Paul — "all one in Christ Jesus," They have alike "put on Christ," the grand and essential distinction before God. But there is a difficulty to be met; the promises were to Abraham and his seed. How then shall a sinner of the Gentiles get connected with Abraham, so as to be interested in these promises? Here the Judaizer might presume that he was on strong ground, and might use it to teach the disciples. "Except ye be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." It seems not unreasonable to insist on any hereditary title to which we can lay claim. On this the Jews insisted in their controversy with the Lord. (John 8:1-59) The Lord allows their hereditary claim to be the seed of Abraham; but they lacked faith, and therefore were not the children of Abraham, as the father of the faithful. Hereditary claim, however valid, must be set aside, because it is of the flesh. The Lord struck at the root of their confidence by showing them what they were in relation to God. They were about to kill Him, because He had spoken to them the truth which He had heard of God; this did not Abraham. The Lord allowed they were the natural children of the kingdom, but only to be cast out. (Mat 8:12) Peter addressed them as "children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with Abraham." (Act 3:25) Paul gave the Jews the place of hereditary title. "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." The Jews, resting in their hereditary privileges, "much every way," despised and rejected Him who was Abraham's seed, and the sum and substance of all promises. "Their table became their snare;" a solemn word of warning to ourselves. The Gentile, who had no hereditary claim on God, by believing on Christ (Abraham's seed), became connected through Christ with Abraham himself. He had the faith of Abraham, who saw Christ's day and rejoiced. It was not, therefore, by means of proselytism, or by means of the law, that the Gentile became connected with Abraham, but by means of Christ. The Gentile became Abraham's seed, not in the legal but the promise order. "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to promise."

"Now I say, That the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world but when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal 4:1-5)

Having mentioned "heirs according to promise," he contrasts that condition with the condition of heirs under the law. The heir under the law is like an infant under guardians, until either, according

to the law of the country, or the arbitrary will of his father, he is of age and competent to act for himself. Now all this while he differs nothing from a servant. Though he is in title possessor of all the estate, he cannot act even on his own property without the permission of his guardians. This, says the apostle, aptly represents the condition of those who were heirs under the law. The elements of the world, their much-boasted ritual and ordinances, acted the same part toward them as the guardian towards the minor. The ordinances of the law kept the very heirs of God in a state of pupilage and bondage, until God's set time came for sending forth His Son, the promised seed of the woman, to which the eye of faith had been directed from the moment of the fall; yet "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." "Fulness of time" is a remarkable expression. Many preparatory steps were needed to show to man that he could only stand in blessing in redemption. Redemption was the original thought of God, but this thought was only brought out in full relief at Pentecost. Man stood not in innocence; man stood not under law. Those who, being under the law, were quickened by the Spirit, were waiting for redemption. At length the time came, and God sent forth His Son, made under the law: magnifying it by His implicit obedience, He magnified it further by bearing its curse, and thus redeeming from under it even the very heirs, that they might come into their proper place as sons, which they could not do so long as they were under the law; for the law kept them in the position of servants, and they could only have the spirit of servants.

"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal 4:6-7) The apostle here contrasts the state of the Gentile believer, standing in the full liberty of the gospel, with that of the saint of old under the law. He thus points out to the Gentile believer the folly of putting himself into that condition from which the saint of old needed the work of Christ on the cross to redeem him, in order to take the place and have the spirit of a son. They were sons, not servants — heirs who had attained their majority, and had liberty of access with all confidence to the Father. Would they again go back to a state of pupilage, and only think and act as a child in that state? The argument is very cogent; there is an intended contrast between, "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:5), and "because ye are sons" (Gal 4:6). The Spirit of adoption was not the portion of Old Testament saints; it is the blessed fruit of accomplished redemption, for which even the disciples of the Lord Jesus had to wait till after His ascension. (See Act 1:4-8) The Gentile had never been under law, but had been "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" on his believing the testimony to forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus. (Compare Acts 10:43-44, Act 11:15-17, with Eph 1:13.) The Spirit of adoption may not be realized by Gentile Christians, because of their Galatian state; but where it is realized, it makes the believer say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." And this is the portion of him who knows the Father, and has the Spirit of adoption. Little cares, little trials, little perplexities, make up the sum and substance of our little lives. To meet these, we need to have the Spirit of adoption; for we need a parent's care, and a parent's heart, and it alone "sufficeth us" to be shown "the Father." We lose much holy joy, because we so little know the Father. How would the thought, My heavenly Father knoweth what things I have need of, deliver us from being cumbered with many things. Rarely do we find Christians going as children to their Father, telling Him the little things that try and vex them, sure of finding a Father's heart into which they may cast their cares. We may be strict and busy in public acts of worship; but it is in the closet where we specially have to do with the Father, and to tell Him our own private necessities in secret. Legality obscures our

sense of relationship with God, as the Father. It makes us think of legal adoption, instead of real relationship. Legal adoption must needs be accompanied with the spirit of a servant. Such was Israel under the law, legally adopted, yet turned out (John 8:35-36); but if the Son makes free, then are we free indeed. It is well to dwell on the confidential nearness into which grace brings us through Jesus. We have access through Jesus by one Spirit to the Father. Legalism effectually bars this access. We need not wonder, therefore, at the strength of the apostle's language, when he saw God's own children debasing themselves as the Galatians were, by putting themselves under law.

"Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Gal 4:8-11) The Galatians had been before their conversion idolaters, and were now in much danger of again lapsing into the principles of idolatry, if not into its more gross form. The prescient eye of the apostle — prescient, because he was under the guidance of the Spirit — looked at that which might have been thought harmless or indifferent as necessarily leading back to idolatry, as it assuredly has done and is doing. Hence his very determined language. What a happy turn does the apostle give from their knowledge of God to God's knowledge of them — "rather are known of God." At the best, our knowledge of God is imperfect, but He thoroughly knows us; and He who knows the worst of us is the very God who has "justified us freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Omniscience, if we regard ourselves as under law, is arrayed against us, but in the gospel, God is for us; and the blood of Jesus Christ not only cleanseth us from all the sin which we know, but from all that which the light of Omniscience can detect. It is well solemnly to mark the strength of the language which the apostle uses. God's own legal ordinances are here said to be "weak and beggarly elements." Beautiful and excellent in their time and place, as shadows of good things to come, they sink into weakness and beggary before Jesus Christ and Him crucified, the one grand ordinance of God. They are not only profitless, they are actual hindrances. Yea, says the apostle to these bewitched Galatians, you are going back again to your old idolatrous ways, by observing days, months, and years, and are dealing with the living God as you did with your dumb idols. And all my labour in preaching to you the gospel of the grace of God appears to be thrown away. How painfully applicable is all this to much of the Christianity of the present day. There are now principles at work which are essentially idolatrous. Men still think that God is served by men's hands, as though He needed something. They know not God in His blessed character of 'Giver,' and therefore come not unto Him as receivers. It is truly distressing to see those who once seemed to love evangelical truth bowed down under a system of ordinances, observing days and months, to the obscuring of their own vision of the one object which God sets before us, even His blessed Son, in the glory of His humiliation, and the glory of His exaltation.

"Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea,

they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you." (Gal 4:12-20) The apostle here, as at the beginning, argues from his own case. "I am as ye are." I take no vantage ground over you, because I was an Israelite, "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless." No, I come down from this my legal standing to your level, and take the same ground as a sinner of the Gentiles. The apostle Peter does the same. "We [Jews] believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." "There is no difference; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is not for Gentiles to take Jewish ground, but for Jews to take the place of 'no difference.' The apostle reminds the Galatians that he held out no attractiveness to them, but the attractiveness of the Cross of Christ to the really awakened sinner. (Joh 12:32.) They had overlooked his personal infirmity in receiving the blessed message of which he was the bearer; and, as the bearer of such a message, they had received him as "an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ." But what was the blessedness they spake of and gloried in? Did it make them happy to hear Paul propound to them the works of the law as the ground of their acceptance with God, or a system of ordinances as the ground of their approach to God? He knew and they knew that had this been the substance of his preaching, it would have been no blessedness to them. He had set forth before them the Cross of Christ, and, through that, death abolished, sin made an end of, everlasting righteousness brought in, and the law no longer able to keep in prison. (See Rom 7:6) And as a blessed consequence, such nearness to God as may be known in the loving confidence of a child toward an affectionate parent. Was the apostle their enemy in afresh pressing upon their hearts and consciences that truth which he had formerly preached to them, and by means of which they had been made free? False teachers were trying to set the Galatians against the apostle, as though he were an enemy to their blessing, whilst these teachers were themselves diligently trying to undermine the very groundwork of their blessing. And they did not try in vain; for hardly had the apostle left them, when their professed love for the apostle, and zeal for the truth he preached, vanished away. How different the Philippians: they had obeyed the truth, not only in his presence, but "much more in his absence;" but the actual presence of the apostle could alone keep the Galatians in the strait path. He travailed anxiously for them in spirit, and desired to be present with them, that he might change the stern voice of rephension for mild encouragement to persist in the truth; for he was in great perplexity about their state. And it was this constant pressure — the care of all the churches — which weighed more on the apostle than all his outward hardships.

We ought not to be surprised, however sorrowful the fact, at seeing a return to ordinances among Christians. It is to be traced up to the legality which is in all our hearts. The reason that real Christians know so little of present joy is that they are legal; and when they are so they try to make others as miserable as themselves; judging alike those who are above and those who are below their standard. The only antidote to legality is to have "Christ formed in us." This is the special office of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, who glorifies Christ, taking us away from the law unto its real end and object, even righteousness; for "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

## 02.05 Lecture 5. Galatians 4: 21-31; Galatians 5: 1-13.

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Lecture 5. Gal 4:21-31; Gal 5:1-13.

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" (Gal 4:21) When once we recognize that God has a purpose, and that, too, an eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, we are prepared to find in the earliest part of God's word those great principles which He intends to illustrate. Among these we find two remarkably connected together; the one, that no flesh shall glory in the presence of the Lord; the other, that he that glorieth must glory only in the Lord. These great principles are copiously illustrated in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. God will show Himself to be God, and it is necessary not only to show that the creature is not God, but, also, that the only proper place of the creature, and his only possible happiness is dependence on God. This great truth is illustriously brought out in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. God and His creature man are thereby set in their proper relation one to the other — God the giver, man the recipient — God, not man, the actor — the creature redeemed, supremely blessed, because God is glorified. This is God's eternal purpose. But how many are the foreshowings and foreactings of this, before it is either fully revealed or will be fully displayed. The book of Genesis, besides being the most ancient historical record extant, has this deep interest — it is a book of great principles. It is to this book that the Lord and His apostles so frequently refer to illustrate their teaching. The Lord Himself refers back to God's original creation of a male and a female, to show the sanctity of the marriage tie in the mind of God. He points to Abel as the righteous sufferer. He refers to the days of Noah and Lot, as illustrative of the unpreparedness of men for the day of the Son of man. He refers to Abraham as rejoicing to see His day, at the same time asserting His own essential Deity in these memorable words, "Before Abraham was, I am." We need not, therefore, be surprised that the apostle, led of the Spirit, (for known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world,) should find "the law" in the earlier chapters of Genesis, four hundred years before it was actually given from Mount Sinai. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" The apostle finds the law in the history of the father of the faithful. He had before illustrated, by Abraham and his faith in God, his great argument, that blessing from God can only come in the way of faith. He now illustrates, by the failure of Abraham, how insidiously the principle of law had entered in to mar the blessing of the father of the faithful himself, and so disturbed the peace of the family of faith, that there was no rest to Abraham or his family till the law was cast out. How important is it for us to regard the Scriptures in the light in which God has set them forth, even as a revelation of Himself, of His thoughts, and counsels, and intentions. What an immense difference it makes between one man and another as to the place the Bible occupies in their respective estimation! One man regards the Scriptures as a mass of ancient records, out of which he may gather what light he can; as though man, and not God, was both the beginning and end of these various writings. The spiritual man, redeemed to God by the blood of Jesus, finds himself let into the counsels and thoughts of God (Eph 1:7-9); and able to trace throughout the marvellous volume the counsel and design of God; so that the great point openly discussed by the apostle in this epistle, he finds remarkably illustrated in the history of

Abraham.

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise." (Gal 4:22-23) In Gen 15:1-21, the word of the Lord comes to Abraham in a vision; and for the first time is that heaven-born word heard by a sinful man, "Fear not, Abram;" and how strong the ground afforded for taking away all fear: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." All that which is subsequently unfolded to Abraham is wrapt up in this comprehensive blessing. But how can such a blessing come to Abraham, seeing the circumstances in which he is? "Behold," says Abram, in answer to the announcement thus made, "to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in mine house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." Abraham believed that God could do that which Abraham could not do. It is this which the gospel presents to us, "That which is impossible with men is possible with God." It is possible for God to make a sinner perfectly righteous, and the way in which He does this, and the ground of His doing it, is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; so that no question ought to agitate the mind of the believer as to his complete justification. But there is a kind of hereditary disease in the family of faith, even the disease of unbelief; and we see, in the history of Abraham before us, an early exhibition of it. Faith and patience are necessarily connected together; but unbelief is restless and impatient, and would take things out of God's hands into its own. Abraham had left his country and kindred at the call of God. This act of faith is recorded by the apostle in another place: "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went forth, not knowing whither he went." We get deep instruction, not only from the faith, but even from the very failures, of the father of the faithful. After so decided an act of faith on the part of Abraham, even his renouncing every thing at the call of God, we are hardly prepared for signal failure. But so it is. The failure of the believer is usually manifested in some instance where it would seem more easy to trust in God, than in instances in which we had previously trusted Him. But habitual dependence on God is always contrary to nature. Abraham and Sarah became impatient, and thought to get, by their own wisdom and strength, that very blessing which God had promised to bestow by His power and grace. Hence the giving of Hagar to Abraham by Sarah. (Gen 16:1-16) This was, in reality, an attempt to get the promised blessing in the way of law; and it issued, as all such attempts must issue, in signal and sorrowful failure. The immediate result was, that Sarah was 'despised' by Hagar. The Pharisees, proud of their own righteousness, 'despised' Him by whom came grace and truth. So with respect to ourselves; when we become legal, grace becomes contemptible in our eyes. Hagar bore a son, but he was born after the flesh. The word 'flesh' is here used to denote man's power. If you bring in man's power, and attempt to add it to God's power, there is confusion and trouble. the power of man, is here contrasted with promise — with that which God Himself had undertaken to do. Flesh and promise cannot stand together; salvation must be either by the power of man, or by the power of God; and if we refer it to the power of God, we must not bring in the power of man as helping it. God will show Himself to be the Almighty" — the all-sufficient God — for effectuating His own promises in the case of all the family of faith, as well as in the case of the father of the faithful. (Gen 17:1)

"Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." (Gal 4:24-27)

We are here taught by the apostle, that these facts in the history of Abraham are intended to teach us a great moral lesson. The Lord Himself has ruled, that "the Scriptures cannot be broken," meaning the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and that these "Scriptures testify of Him." The apostle in another place lays it down as a general rule, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." What deep spiritual truth is often couched under an historical fact very simply narrated. When we look back to the garden of Eden, we find the deepest truth (which has only been brought clearly out since the coming down of the Holy Ghost) foreshadowed, when Adam said, "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." "We are members of Christ's body, we are of His flesh and of His bones." And so in this episode in Abraham's history, we find deep spiritual instruction.

Hagar represents Mount Sinai and its covenant, under which Jerusalem was at the time of the apostle's writing, and from which she refused to be delivered by the gospel of grace. To this covenant of bondage the Galatians were being turned — "they desired to be under law." Hagar, in the presence of Sarah, could never forget that she was a bondwoman. And the law in its spirit must always guide unto bondage. It was, as Peter says, "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." The Galatians were tempted to exchange "the easy yoke" of Jesus for the heavy yoke of the law. How strange, yet how true, that we should prefer spiritual bondage to spiritual freedom. But the reason is plain; if set free, it must be entirely owing to the grace of God; and our proud hearts refuse to submit to this. Yes; men refuse to be saved as lost and ruined sinners, from first to last, by the grace of God, through the precious blood of Christ. They will not "submit to the righteousness of God;" but, like Jerusalem in the text, bind their chains more closely round them; and, not content with this, seek to bring others into bondage with themselves. When Christians lost their sense of their heavenly and unworldly calling, as the keen eye of the apostle saw the Galatians beginning to do, they looked to Hagar, not to Sarah. They took as their pattern "the Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." And the result would be, and actually is, a religious system as truly bondage as Judaism itself. Christ did not come into the world to institute a religion, but to save sinners, and so to save them as to "deliver them out of this present evil world," and to make them citizens of a heavenly Jerusalem, even Jerusalem which is above, and which is free. And where do we find freedom, but by being introduced into the presence of the Father through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus? Worldly religion hinders access with confidence through the faith of Jesus to the Father. The law — Jerusalem which now is — could never lead any under it to cry, Abba, Father. This is the result of accomplished redemption, and one of the richest gifts that comes down from above — even from the Jerusalem which is above, and is free. True, we take our place as servants now; but still it is as sons, even as the Son of God Himself took His place as servant here; and, hence, our very service is liberty. The whole Jewish system was necessarily one of bondage; Jerusalem that now is — Jerusalem not knowing redemption. But, through faith, "we are come to the Mount Zion, and to the heavenly

Jerusalem;" and, therefore, have "the garment of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness." The apostle quotes Isa 54:1, in illustration of the Jerusalem above being the happy mother of free-born children. Hagar, when she conceived, despised her mistress; but laughter from God was not to be connected with her son; but with Isaac, the son of Sarah. "Rejoice, thou barren (Sarah, not Hagar) that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." How blessedly does this follow immediately on the details of Christ's suffering for us in the previous chapter of the prophet. We should read the chapters together, to see even the present glory following those sufferings, in enabling "the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children." This is a true type of grace. The law knew nothing of praise. Hagar's son was born of the flesh. Sarah's child was the child of God's grace and power. So it was with Hannah subsequently. The barren woman bearing can only find utterance in praise. Outward greatness and glory may be connected with bondage; for men are either slaves of sin, or of the law, or of the world, till they know redemption. Ishmael was great in the presence of his brethren, while Isaac was in obscurity; so it was with Esau while Jacob was serving; and so now professing Christians may be great and glorious, because they are lovers of their own selves. But they know not the liberty of truth; they know not grace, and praise cannot burst forth. When the work of Christ was finished on the Cross, and presented as the object to faith; to those who saw it and believed in it, nothing remained but praise. "Rejoice, O barren, that bearest not." "Rejoice, in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman." (Gal 4:28-30)

How constantly are we reminded, that all error is to be traced up to the departure from a very few fundamental principles. What was the Galatian error? What is Christendom of the present day but the practical denial "that a man must be born again"? Was Isaac the child of natural or supernatural power? We all say that after God had stamped death, both upon Abraham and Sarah (see Rom 4:19), as to all expectation of having a child, then God, according to His promise and power, gave them Isaac. "Now we, brethren," says the apostle, "as Isaac was, are the children of promise;" "born of the Spirit;" "born of the incorruptible seed of the Word;" of God's "own will, begotten by the word of truth;" "born of God." And if there be faith in our hearts, it is the result of the like mighty power of God which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead. (See Eph 1:19) Now, it is against such a power as this being needed by man, to enable him to "see" and "enter into the kingdom of God," so as to have to do with God in mercy and salvation, that man frets and kicks. And the professing body have ignored the truth, some one way and some another, that "we must be born again."

Ishmael and Isaac cannot live in the same house, or go on peaceably together. When Isaac, Sarah's son, is weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the occasion, Ishmael, Hagar's son, 'mocks.' He looks at Isaac as despicable and insignificant; mocks at the old age of Sarah, compared with the vigour and comeliness of Hagar. "Even so it is now." There is nothing man more instinctively dislikes than grace. He cannot endure the thought that God should make one to differ from another, and that the difference is not made by man himself. Man naturally frets more

against the grace, than he does against the holiness of God. He presumes that he can, by some means or other of his own devising, meet the holiness of God; but grace is God's ability to meet man in his utmost need, and unspeakably to bless him. The oft-repeated story of religious persecution is but the story of Ishmael and Isaac here pointed out by the apostle. And the peculiar form of Ishmael's opposition to Isaac, even mocking, is very characteristic of the day in which we live; for the more man comes to glory in the greatness of his own powers, the greater will be his antagonism to "the gospel of the grace of God." The unrelenting word comes to Abraham, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 'Grievous' indeed was it to Abraham to cast them out; it went against his feelings and affections to do so; but it was not more 'grievous' to Abraham to do so, than it is for us to turn the law out of doors. It cleaves so fast to us. It seems so grievous to us to give up the works of our own hands, and to renounce that on which we have most prided ourselves. But until Hagar is gone, there is and can be no peace in the house of Abraham. Until the law, and all expectation from it, is thoroughly renounced, there is no peace in the soul. "Being justified by faith, we have peace."

How little do even real Christians apprehend their present dignity, "Sons and heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ." And so long as they cleave to the law, it is impossible for them to realize their title to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven." The realizing of this title necessarily puts those who do so into the place of pilgrims and strangers here. To be an heir of all that God can give can never be earned by any thing a man can do. The law made those under it servants, not sons; and to be an heir, it is necessary to be a son, even to be born to an inheritance. How impossible is it, until we enter into God's thoughts in giving to us the Scriptures, to read, in what was apparently but a passionate speech of an angry woman, a most profound spiritual truth. "The son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." And so it was historically. "And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son." Isaac was 'heir' according to God's original promise. (Gen 15:4) Others might have gifts, and flourish; but nothing would satisfy Sarah but the heirship for her son. It is even so now. Men are content with an outward knowledge of Christ, and the many gifts which they get thereby; but they stand entirely apart from the true heirs of God. Born of Him, they can be satisfied with nothing less than God is pleased to give; and if He has given them now the unspeakable gift of Christ, and they have received Him by faith, how will not God with Christ freely give them all things? The children of the concubines receive their gifts, and go their way. So now; all connected with the false Church receive their gifts, and think not of the inheritance, yea, despise it. The present engrosses their minds; and the spirit of the age is strongly set on present blessings, by the development of human powers. Thus, like Esau, they despise the birthright; for what good does it do? They may, indeed, desire the inheritance, when about to be removed from the present scene. But God has inseparably joined together the birthright and the inheritance; and those who despise the birthright will never be heirs. Men despise being born of God; they direct their malice and their wit against those who prize the birthright, and thus despising, as Esau, the birthright, can never possess the inheritance.

"So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of

bondage." (Gal 4:31, Gal 5:1)

If born of God, we are not children of Hagar, but of Sarah — free-born children of the free-woman, set free by the Son Himself, and therefore free indeed. It is into the liberty of sons that Christ has brought us; and although the glorious liberty of sons be that for which we wait, even to be manifested with Christ the Son in glory; yet, even now, it is a glorious liberty to have access unto the Father with confidence by the Spirit of adoption, instead of having a yoke of bondage imposed on us by those who would tempt God by forcing the law on us. (See Acts 15:1-41) The only one who is free from law, is he who can look at it in all its condemning power, and yet knows deliverance from it by the Cross of Christ. (Rom 7:4-6.) And he alone who is thus delivered from it upholds the law in all its integrity, as "holy, just, and good." What a marvellous liberty is that wherewith Christ has made us free. It is the liberty of truth. (Joh 8:32.) We dare to look at things as they really are — to look at the very worst of our condition — to see fully our guilt and helplessness as sinners, and appalling as this is, it is amply met by seeing the grace of God in truth, and the reality of Christ's propitiatory work on the Cross. And what a blessed reality it is, that Christ is "of God made unto us righteousness!" What liberty to be delivered from the vain attempt to find some ground of confidence in ourselves toward God! What liberty to be occupied, not with ourselves, but with the worthiness of the Lamb slain. The apostle's word of command is, "Stand fast in the liberty." And how needed the word; for there are many 'entanglements' to which we are liable, and by means of which we exchange the liberty of Christ for a yoke of bondage. One of the readiest entanglements is a system of ordinances: this was the danger of the Galatians. But we have our special danger of entanglement from the traditional religion by which we are surrounded. The yoke of traditional religions is grievously galling to the consciences of many real Christians. We all need the word, "Stand fast in the liberty of Christ," — freedom from all condemnation, freedom of nearness to God, freedom of holiness, freedom of service. Bring in the law, and all this freedom is gone, and in its place a heavy yoke placed upon us.

"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision but faith which worketh by love." (Gal 5:2-6) This is very stern language, but the honour of Christ, as well as the salvation of sinners, was at stake. Christ will not take the place of a helper, to the detriment of His place as a Saviour. Any dependence on legal righteousness, moral or ceremonial, renders Christ 'profitless' unto us. Nothing but salvation meets our need. How often do we hear the phrase, "I know I can do nothing by myself." But this only puts Christ in the place of a helper, and helper indeed He is to thousands who are never saved. The ten lepers were alike helped by Christ, but one only had faith to throw himself at His feet, and thus to get salvation. If you look partly to yourself, and partly to Christ, "Christ shall profit you nothing." What profit is Christ Himself to thousands who bear His name? Well might the apostle, who gave up every advantage for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, ask this question. Christ was truly all to him. Well might he reiterate the testimony, "He that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law." The holy majesty of the law, the rich grace of the gospel, and the glory of Christ, alike forbid the vain and senseless attempt to make our own partial obedience, together with Christ, the ground of our salvation. Such an attempt is, in the language of

the apostle, to nullify the work of Christ on the Cross, as though it were a needless work, and to fall from grace — to abandon the firm rock of God's grace in Christ Jesus, for the sandy foundation of our own righteousness. It is, indeed, a fearful thing for a Christian to fall into sin; but even for such a one there is provision in the rich grace of the gospel. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." But to fall from grace is to reassert confidence in the flesh, and to give up confidence in Christ; it is to turn the gospel into a mere remedial law; so as to produce a religion, which leaves man in his native distance from God, without purging his conscience, or giving him peace with God. Man, as a sinner, needs salvation, and this the grace of God brings to him. To fall from grace is to undermine the certainty of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, and to leave salvation as a grand uncertainty, to be determined at the day of judgment, instead of receiving it now as of God, and on the ground of it rejoicing in peace with God, and nearness to God. But those who thus 'fall from grace,' not only abandon the truth of the gospel as to present justification before God by faith in Christ, but they surrender also the true Christian hope, by making the attainment of righteousness their hope, instead of making present righteousness, through faith in Jesus, the sure warrant for expecting glory. "We," says the apostle, in the name of all believers, "wait not for righteousness, but the hope to which righteousness is entitled." If we tamper with the truth of present acceptance in the Beloved, we undermine the blessed hope for which, through the Spirit, we are entitled to wait — even glory. We find many Christians looking to justification, as something in prospect, instead of seeing that they possess it now, and on that ground rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. The Lord Himself is our 'righteousness,' and our hope is grounded on that righteousness; and what a glorious hope it is, even that those who are thus "righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

All distinctions in the flesh become lost where there is faith in Christ. Circumcision, the badge in the flesh of God's earthly people, 'availeth' no more than uncircumcision. It is a new living principle which is needed. Such is faith wrought in the heart by the Spirit of God. And such faith is an energetic principle; it "worketh by love," The law could give neither life nor righteousness; it might command love to God and man, but was powerless to enforce its own enactment; but faith 'worketh' by love to God and man.

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Gal 5:7-9)

It is "obedience to the truth" which is now God's test of obedience. It is not man's competence to present himself in moral righteousness to God which is in question; that has been decided already in the negative. But the question is, Will man accept righteousness as a gift from God? will he accept Christ as the righteousness of God, by faith in His name? This is the test. On this turns the judgment; as it is written, "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven . . . taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." How many are now making, as the Galatians did, their very imperfect and partial obedience to the law a positive hindrance to obeying the gospel. It might appear a little matter; but the apostle discovered in this legal tendency that leaven which would corrupt the whole gospel, and deprive it of its glory. When the truth of the gospel is at stake, the apostle speaks with stern decision. It is a bad sign when there is not stern contention for the truth of the gospel — when there is more sensitiveness about our own honour than the honour of Christ — the honour of His cross, and His spotless

righteousness.

"I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Gal 5:10-12) The apostle knew that 'the truth' he set forth would be responded to by the heart and conscience of those who had been quickened by the grace of God, however for the moment that truth had been overlaid by legalism. This was his confidence in them through the Lord. How earnestly and constantly do real Christians need to be "persuaded to continue in the grace of God." (Act 13:43) It is remarkable to find the concurrent testimony of the apostles to the real character of legalism. It presents itself in such a fair form, — moral, philanthropical, or religious, that it seems hard to characterize it as the great disturber and troubles. Such was the united testimony of the apostles in their one memorable council recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law." And so the apostle here characterizes the legal teacher as a troubler; and whilst such 'trouble' by their 'words' and teaching, how many Christians are self-tormentors because they look to themselves, instead of looking to Christ. The Apostle will not spare the legal teacher be he who he may, he shall bear his judgment. Yes, hard as it may appear — uncharitable, as men in our days would say — the apostle hesitates not to say, "I would they were even cut of that trouble you." The glory of God and His Christ are in question; and such being the case, soft words are not in season. The apostle knew that the preaching of a modified gospel, so as to mingle God's grace and man's work together, and to give much more prominence to man's work than the work of Christ on the cross, would take away the offence of the cross. And so it has done. Men may preach, and men may say that Christ "died for our sins;" but they hesitate as to the true conclusion, "then are we saved." The real offence of the cross is, that while it takes away from man every possible ground of confidence in himself, it gives to him, as a known and proved sinner, such a ground of confidence with God, that he can have peace with Him on the ground of His holiness, as well as of His grace. The offence of the Cross still exists, when the Cross is set forth as the verdict of God against man's righteousness, wisdom, and goodness, and the introduction of a new order of things, even Christ and Him crucified, "the wisdom and power of God" to those who are "called of God, and saved by His grace." (1Co 1:18-24.)

## 02.06 Lecture 6. Galatians 5: 13 - Galatians 6: 18.

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Lecture 6. Gal 5:13-26, Gal 6:1-18.

"For, brethren, ye have been called into liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." (Gal 5:13-15.)

There is ever a strong tendency in us to "savour the things of men" in the things of God. We put our construction and draw our own inferences from the thoughts of God, which are not like our thoughts, but infinitely higher and more blessed (see Isa 55:8-9), and thus debase them. Look, for example, at liberty; how wide the distinction between the human and divine thought on this very point. Liberty, according to man, is wilfulness — every check taken off from the human will, issuing in the very worst form of corruption and apostasy. The Jews in their worst state of bondage, both temporal and spiritual, had the hardihood to say, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" How solemn the reply of Jesus to these boasters of their freedom. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [slave] of sin." (John 8:34-35) The apostle Peter very plainly shows, that in the days in which we live, the loudest boasters of liberty were themselves miserable slaves of corruption. (2Pe 2:18-19) We are called unto 'liberty,' but not a liberty for the flesh to act, but for us to serve. Christians are often led to connect their worship and their service with their salvation. But the truth is, they are made free by Christ in order to worship, to serve God, and serve their brethren; yea, and to serve all men, so far as they can. The gospel is the law of liberty, the law of love. And how easy and blessed is the law of love: love has 'a constraining' power — the law, rather a restraining power. The law of liberty is not "Thou shalt not," but its language is, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart." Until the question of our individual acceptance is settled, the heart is not 'enlarged' to serve God. We are made free from sin by the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, in order to become servants of God. Real liberty and true holiness are inseparably connected together. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets free from the law of sin and death." When really free ourselves, instead of judging others, we are free to intercede for them, knowing the grace in which we ourselves stand. A legal spirit is ever a fault-finding spirit. If we were more in the region of grace, we should be less in the region of judgment. But the moment we become legal, we bite and devour one another, instead of ministering grace one to another, cheering one another onward, so as to enable us to tread with a lighter step this weary wilderness.

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Gal 5:16)

How important it is for us to have the thoughts of God with respect to 'the Spirit,' as contrasted with 'the flesh,' The true doctrine of the cross, and life in the Spirit, are intimately connected together; so that we cannot truthfully hold the one apart from the other. God's judgment has been passed on 'the flesh' in the cross of Christ, where God "made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we

might be made the righteousness of God in Him." In consequence of this, life in the Spirit flows forth from the risen and glorified Jesus. The spiritual man is a new order of man, coming forth after death and judgment have passed on the old man. (See Gal 2:21)

It is according to this new order of man that we should walk. The Spirit makes us alive to new thoughts, new affections, new interests. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The spiritual man finds every thing of the world antagonistic to him. He cannot feel at home in the world. His interests are in another sphere. He worships in an unseen temple, and has an unseen altar and priesthood — all is spiritual, and it is only by walking according to this order that we shall be kept from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. If we would avoid bad company, the best way is to keep good company. And it requires but a small amount of Christian experience to trace our most grievous failures to walking in the flesh; we forget from what we have been redeemed, and at what a price. If we walk not in the Spirit, having our desires, thoughts, and interests in heaven, we shall often fall even below the world's standard of righteousness; because we have not the restraints which the world is forced to put on the flesh, to conceal its real character. When Israel ceased to regard their peculiar privilege of having Jehovah for their king, and desired to be as the nations among whom they were 'not to be reckoned,' they speedily became worse than the nations. If Christians settle down into conventional righteousness, they make the cross only a safeguard from punishment, and know it not as a mighty separating power, even as that which separates between oneself and oneself, and as that which delivers from the world. Hence lowness of walk; because the only real safeguard against fulfilling the lusts of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." (Gal 5:17-18) A great truth is here brought out in strong relief. There is hardly a Christian who has not practically attempted to contradict the assertion, that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other. The doctrine of progressive sanctification' virtually denies this truth. We are "sanctified unto the obedience, as well as the sprinkling, of the blood of Jesus Christ;" but the flesh, even in the believer, is unchangeably the same, and he is made very experimentally to know that 'the flesh' is enmity against God, and to find his power against it in the cross of Christ. It is the presence of the Spirit which makes us know the evil of the flesh. We become disappointed in ourselves and in others; but this should teach us the unchangeable character of the flesh, whether regarded morally, intellectually, or religiously. We are surrounded by religious flesh — flesh in its most dangerous form, because it uses the name of Christ to sanction itself. But still the word remains unrepealed: "All flesh is grass." But the apostle does not make a one-sided statement, so as to allow us to use the knowledge of what the flesh really is, to sanction its workings. The flesh is hindered by the counter working of the Spirit, so that it cannot carry out its own tendencies. It is still flesh, ever the same, so that the most advanced Christian cannot put off his armour as though it were subdued. He knows it better, and is more watchful against its subtle wiles, and understands how to meet it by looking to the cross of Christ. And when the flesh would say, 'Spare thyself,' it is met by the word of the Master, 'Take up thy cross.'

It is an important thing to be led of the Spirit. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And the Spirit leads us also into conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; but the Spirit also leads us unto Jesus, and guides us into all truth, and shows us where our strength is —

not in legal endeavours, but in receiving out of the fulness of Jesus. "If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law."

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal 5:19-21)

What a dark catalogue of the works of the flesh which are manifest. There are other workings of the flesh which are not open and palpable, and which can only be judged by those who are spiritual. There is 'the fleshly mind' (Col 2:18), and 'the flesh' in its religious aspect, in which Paul could have no confidence. (Php 3:3-4) But even in the works of the flesh which are manifest, while some are morally offensive to us, others are not so, but are equally offensive to God. We draw distinctions between these works which the apostle classes together. While outward sensuality and libertinism is reprobated as fearfully evil and injurious to human society; 'variance, emulations, wrath, strife, heresies,' are not regarded in so dark a light; and yet they prove equally, that there is no fear of God as an influential principle, and they equally exclude from 'the kingdom of God.' 'Emulation' is the work of the flesh. It is the principle on which most of us have been educated; but it is in its spirit the most opposite to the Spirit of Him "who did not strive, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." 'Emulation,' as rivalry, or competition, is the life of the world; it is honoured and respected; but it is but "the potsherd striving with the potsherd of the earth," to the utter forgetfulness of the real condition of man before God, as a lost and ruined sinner, and real greatness in the kingdom of heaven. (Mat 18:1-7) 'Envyings and murders' are grouped together, even as they came into the world together in Cain. 'Drunkenness and revellings' are found together; and 'such like' comprises all those exciting and refined amusements, for which men are content to pay so dearly. The world is glad to restrain some of the more gross works of the flesh for its own sake, whilst they encourage, as necessary and even advantageous, 'emulations,' 'revellings, and such like.' Herod heard John gladly up to a certain point; but when John plainly touched his conscience, by saying, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," he put John in prison. 'Seditions and heresies,' party-spirit in the State, and party-spirit in the Church, for such is heresy, may often be found combined together against the truth of God. In this epistle, whilst the apostle presents us with a rich exhibition of the grace of God, he comes in with a most unsparing hand against the flesh, its lusts, its affections, and its works. Stern as the apostle is against the corrupters of the grace of the gospel, he is no less stern in his denunciation of practical ungodliness. "I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal 5:22-24)

There is a happy contrast between "the works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit." The flesh works, as it were, independently; but the Spirit produces fruit by our abiding in Christ. "From me is thy fruit found." And so we have the connection in this passage between the fruit of the Spirit, and the doctrine of the cross. God, in the Cross of Christ, has passed sentence and executed

judgment on the flesh and its works. And so those who are in the Spirit recognize the Cross, and use it practically as their power against the flesh, and its affections and lusts. If the apostle brings in the Cross as a mighty separating power between himself and himself; "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" he here brings it to bear in moral power on the affections and lusts of the flesh. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." The fruit of the Spirit is but a single cluster, but of beautiful variety; but if we count up the varieties of which the cluster is formed, how they fall numerically below the works of the flesh. Sorrowful truth, but too plain, that which we witness and which make up the outward manifestation of human life, are the works of the flesh, against which the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against which there is law. Many of the samples of the fruit of the Spirit are so unobtrusive, that if we were walking in the Spirit we should be "unknown, yet well known;" passing as pilgrims and strangers through the world, without joining in its restless interest. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is of great price in the sight of God." "Against such there is no law." May those who know the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, so "abide in Him as to bring forth much fruit, that the Father may be glorified."

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." (Gal 5:25-26; Gal 6:1)

How little of real spiritual joy is known by most of us. Yet surely "the lines are fallen to us in pleasant places," "the Holy Spirit being the earnest of our inheritance." We do not live in the Spirit as we might do. Christ is the object and source of our life; and, as risen with Him, we are called upon to set our affections on things above. If our conversation be not in heaven our walk will not be in the Spirit. It is a present heaven which is now our portion, because Christ is there; "as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly;" We are partakers of a heavenly calling. If we only look forward to the enjoyment of heaven at some future time, we shall have no spiritual joy now. And our walk will be according to our condition — a vain attempt to serve God and mammon. If we live in the Spirit, we enter on eternal life now 'we have eternal life,' and our walk should correspond to that which we have. A Christian should not only walk before God and with God, but be so occupied with those joys which are spiritual and eternal as to be able to help and gladden others vainly struggling with the many forms of human misery. We are not walking in the Spirit when we are desirous of vain glory. We are come down to a lower level, and draw the comparison between ourselves and others, instead of living in the enjoyment of the heavenly realities which are ours in Christ. He who lives in the Spirit lives near to God, and has need to be severe in judging himself, so that he has little heart to judge another; but a legal spirit always binds us down to the world, and sets us on the judgment-seat, instead of bringing us before the mercy-seat.

There is a restoring power in the grace of the gospel of which the law is incapable. The law can condemn, but it has no power to restore. In nothing do Christians show themselves more legal than in dealing with 'a brother overtaken in a fault.' They judge as they are bound in faithfulness to Christ to do; but is it with a view to restoration? The spiritual man knows how to restore; the natural may convict and pride himself on another's fall, but he cannot restore. And how low are Christians fallen; how do they walk as men in judging others, instead of considering themselves, lest they be also tempted. How wonderfully consistent is the doctrine of Scripture; 'considering thyself.' Let no

Christian consider himself as proof against a fall, however faithful he may be. It is dangerous to presume on our faithfulness, but safe when considering ourselves; because of our sense of the unchanging evil of the flesh to rest humbly, yet confidently, in the faithfulness of God. We all know our personal need of restoring grace, and to that same grace should we look for the restoration of a fallen brother.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden." (Gal 6:2-5)

It is Christ Himself who invites 'the heavy-laden' to come to Him, and that He will give them rest. And He would have us learn of Him in this respect, that we might bear one another's burdens. The Lord of glory Himself, who had no burden of His own to bear, was pleased to put Himself even under our heavy burden of sin, and "to bear it in His own body on the tree; that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed." How shall we answer this amazing instance of love but by His own new commandment, "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." We should go before God and make our brother's sins our own in confession, even as Daniel did, identifying himself, though separate from it personally, with the sin of Israel. "We have sinned, we have committed iniquity." It is in this way that we come into the apprehension of the restoring grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The very fall of another, which would naturally lead us to thank God that we are not as other men, should lead us to see that we only stand by faith, and if we become high-minded we shall fall. The moment we think ourselves to be something, we only deceive ourselves; we forget that grace alone maketh us to differ, and like Jerusalem, instead of regarding the perfect comeliness which God has put upon us, we trust in our own beauty. (Eze 16:14-15) When this is the case, the real dignity of our standing becomes lost to our apprehension; for our 'nothingness' and Christ's all-sufficiency are necessarily connected together. We cannot hold the one without holding the other. It is both common and easy to glory with respect to another, by drawing a comparison between ourselves and another. But this is to take a low standard. We must look to the perfect example of Christ Himself, and that never fails to cast us on His unfailing grace and His finished work. (See 1Pe 2:21-25) We are called upon to prove our own work, not our brother's; to give an account of ourselves to God, and not of others. "Every man shall bear his own burden;" therefore, "let him prove his own work."

"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." (Gal 6:6)

It had been said of old, "Buy the truth, and sell it not" (Pro 23:23); but is has ever been found, that few attach much value to 'the truth.' The Lord Himself, 'the truth,' was valued at thirty pieces of silver, a goodly price — the price of a slave; and therefore we must not be surprised to find, that the most inestimable treasure, 'the word of salvation,' is prized at but a low rate. Men of the world pay highly for their pleasures and amusements; and men will also pay for outward religion. But 'the truth,' that which comes from God to show to man his real condition in reference to God, and the way of reconciliation with God, man values not. But the apostle found, that even real Christians did not estimate the value of the ministry of the word at all adequately. And he exhorts the Galatians to prove that they appreciated the value of the gospel, and had as much delight in it as the men of

the world appreciate and value their pleasures.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal 6:7-8 This is a very solemn word to Christians. It is connected with the word which immediately precedes it; "God is not mocked." He regards our objects, our interests, our very tastes. What are they? Is it our object to know so much of Christ only as we think needful for our salvation, and then to sink down into decent worldliness; so that the very men of the world can perceive that we are as eager in the pursuit of this world as they themselves are? Let us not be deceived; for God is not mocked. And the wisdom of God has laid down the rule, that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. 'The flesh' in a Christian, although it be his privilege to recognize its judgment in the cross, will be found putting forth its claims, and craving to be satisfied. It is specially spoken to the Christian: "He that soweth to his flesh." It is easy to see that those who are in the flesh can only sow to the flesh. But there is in the Christian another principle, 'the Spirit.' The contrast is not without meaning, 'his flesh,' the Spirit. There is a way of avoiding the keen edge of the Word of God — the sword of the Spirit — by turning it against the unconverted, instead of allowing us to probe our own consciences. Therefore, says the apostle to us, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." If the Christian sow to his flesh, he shall reap what he sows, even corruption. Nor does it require any very lengthened experience to prove to the Christian how every result of sowing to the flesh has issued in disappointment, if not in deadness of soul, or positive corruption. But there is a peculiar form of 'the flesh' to which the Christian is liable to sow, and that is to religious flesh, in some shape or other. There is the same tendency in us as in the Galatians, to turn aside from the true doctrine of the cross to ordinances, or to seek to please the imagination, or puff up the intellect; and where this kind of sowing takes place, what a harvest of corruption do Christians reap. And, oh what a mercy, however smart the discipline, if all their works are now burnt up, and they, stripped of every thing, are led to the Cross of Christ to be saved by that, and nothing else. There is another contrast here, in the respective harvests to be reaped — 'corruption' — 'everlasting life.' There is an everlastingness in all that is sown to the Spirit. When the Lord speaks of fruit resulting from abiding in Him, it is fruit which should remain. Where the gospel is received, it is everlasting in its effects. There will be no forgetfulness, when in heaven, as to how we came there. That way will be had in everlasting remembrance, in the never-tiring new song, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Nothing done in reference to Christ, His cause, His people, will be forgotten, be it small or great; the cup of cold water given in the name of Christ, will have an everlastingness in it. It is well for us now to look to this our sowing time; for our harvest will be as our sowing is, whether to our flesh, or to the Spirit.

"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them which are of the household of faith." (Gal 6:9-10)

There was such a blessedness in the gospel, when the Galatians first heard it (Gal 4:15), that no self-sacrifice was thought too great, so that they might testify their value for it. But when they listened to those who would pervert the gospel, and dim their perception of its rich grace, weariness supervened. They became busied about ordinances and their own salvation, and thus became weary in well-doing. They needed to have the great doctrines of grace again ministered to

them to stir up their earlier zeal. Scripture and experience alike show the tendency in the believer to "leave his first love." When first the light of the gospel bursts on the soul, it is so blessed that hardly any thing appears a sacrifice. Little does he know the deadening influence of all around him, or the deceitfulness of his own heart; and weariness in well-doing ensues. Our apostle, in another place, shows us the need of the reiterated application of the doctrines of grace to the heart and conscience, in order to "maintain good works." (Tit 3:4-8.) We may be disappointed in our expectations for the present; "but in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." The Lord's own ministry seemed to be 'in vain' (Isa 49:4); but it only seemed. He was not discouraged; and now that 'the due season' has come, what an abundant harvest is gathered in from that one "corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died." The ministry of Paul seemed to end in failure (2Ti 1:15); but we are witnesses this day that his labour in the Lord was not in vain; while we get strength, comfort, and refreshment from his writings. "Let us, then, not be weary in well-doing." This is our time of 'opportunity.' In heaven we shall have no sick to visit, no widows and fatherless to comfort, no backslider to reclaim. Our hearts should be enlarged to all human suffering, "for our heavenly Father is kind to the unthankful and the evil;" but the "household of faith" has claims on our highest sympathies. And we know, that for the most part it is a tried, tempted, and suffering household. Alas! on a retrospect, how many lost opportunities present themselves to our view.

"Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh." (Gal 6:11-13.) The epistle to the Galatians appears to be the only one which the apostle wrote with his own hand. Tertius wrote the epistle to the Romans, and the apostle closed it with his benediction and signature. The apostle's spirit was stirred; for the truth of the gospel was at stake, and hence the urgency of the case. He wrote to them with his own hand. Circumcision was the point in the apostle's days, because it was the badge of adherence to that which was established and formal. It served to accredit the flesh, and nothing does the flesh affect more than to invest itself with all the privileges of the Church of God, and at the same time avoid the offence of the cross. How ready a way to this was opened by a system of ordinances. Men were taught that they became Christians, not by living faith in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, so as to bring them with a purged conscience to serve the living God, but by submitting to an ordinance. And when once this ground was assumed, one ordinance was imposed on another, so that peace with God was rendered impossible. Peace can only be in one way, the divine way. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And the assertion of this truth has in all ages called forth opposition, if not persecution, from that which is established and ordered, and where man and his works, and not Christ and His cross, are prominent. It is no question of real practical godliness. They who insisted on circumcision did not keep the law but they would impose it, in order that others might recognize an authority which is not of God. When once the soul has laid hold on Christ and Him crucified on the testimony of God, it dare not allow any other authority to come in between itself and God. Various are the desires to supersede or overlay the doctrine of the cross. In our day a busy activity in social improvement is used to conceal the glory of the gospel, as being the only power to set man in a right and happy relation to God.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be unto them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." (Gal 6:14-18.)

Others might desire to glory in fleshly distinctions, but the apostle would only glory in the Cross of Christ, the great leveller of all fleshly distinctions. What was it that had brought the apostle down from his supposed superiority over his co-religionist? (Gal 1:14.) The doctrine of the Cross. What had taught him to take the place of the chief of sinners, seeing he had thought it a religious "duty to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"? (Act 26:9.) It was seeing the glory which God had given to Him whom men, religious men, had rejected and crucified. What had taught the apostle the doctrine he so insisted on to others, that where sin had abounded grace had super-abounded? The Cross of Christ. What had delivered the apostle from the galling yoke of ordinances? The Cross of Christ. (See Col 2:14-15) But the Cross of Christ had done more for him; it had showed him the world in its true character, as that which could not bear the presence of God in it. It had proved that the world's civilization and religion were alike opposed to God; for all the leading authorities in the world, whether those in political power, or the leaders in religion, or the leading minds of the age, had conspired together in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. (1Co 2:8.) Then, through the Cross, the world was to the apostle a crucified thing. He could not look on it with complacency, because he saw its real enmity against goodness itself in the person of the Son of God. Is the world so seen by us through the same medium, even the Cross of Christ? "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." Bring the leading authorities of the age in which we live to this unchangeable test, and it is the same world still — the world which crucified the Lord of glory. But the apostle knew not the Cross apart from the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore, associated with Him risen, he could look down on the world as that out of which he had been delivered. We must know the power of Christ's resurrection, in order to form a right estimate of the world. (1Jn 5:19.) And what was the apostle in the world's estimate? 'A pestilent fellow,' 'a babler,' against whom the wise men of the day directed their wit. (Act 17:32.) He was, in fact, a crucified thing — one whom the world could easily spare, and would be glad to be rid of. Paul had left the world behind him, as to its interests and pursuits, and was crucified unto it. The real power of the doctrine of the Cross is, to show the world in its true light as a judged world, out of which the believer has, in God's amazing grace, been rescued. (Gal 1:4.) So that if he be true to the doctrine of the Cross, he must be crucified unto the world — not only one who cannot help on its interests and objects, but one who stands in the way of its interests and objects. It may be said, that "Christians are not so; the world both accepts their help, and gives them help in return." And why? Because Christians are not true to the Cross of Christ. They do not look at the world through the medium of the Cross; they do not see it, and all that is in it, to be 'not of the Father;' and, consequently, as much arrayed against Jesus as Judas, when he betrayed Him with a kiss. Let us be honest, and test ourselves. Is the world to us a crucified thing, because we glory in the Cross of Christ, and from the Cross see into a glory which makes all the glory of this world fall into the shade? A new creation bursts upon us when we take our stand by the Cross, and see in it the judgment of God on the old creation. He that hanged on the Cross said, "It is finished." And the same blessed One says from the throne, "Behold, I make all things new."

"These words are faithful and true." "It is done." The old creation is passed away, the new one introduced, in which "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain for the former things are passed away." This is the new creation which bursts upon us; and we are to walk according to the rule of it. They only who see the end of the old creation in the Cross, and Jesus as the head of the new creation in resurrection, can take the place of the Israel of God. They have power with God and man, because the flesh is broken and set aside; and they have life in the Spirit meeting its supplies out of the fulness which is in Christ Jesus. "They walk after the Spirit." Peace and mercy be on them. The false teachers insisted much on the outward mark of circumcision; but, says the apostle, I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Scourgings, imprisonments, cold and nakedness, sufferings in preaching the gospel of the grace of God to sinners had left their marks on the body of the apostle. With these marks of suffering for Christ and for the gospel's sake, it was an impertinence to trouble him with the question of circumcision, or other things equally indifferent in themselves. The apostle knew one remedy to meet their case, and answer, as it were, all their questionings, and this he expresses in his earnest prayer for them: "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

## S. High Priest of Good Things to Come.

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High Priest of Good Things to Come.

Heb 9:1-28.

1888 93 The worship of Israel, under the law, was on a principle of far greater distance from God than that of the fathers, when they sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange land. Wherever Abraham went in the land, he found room to pitch his tent, and build his altar; and there he called on the name of the Lord. The intercourse between Abraham and the Lord was much more free, and much more confidential, than any Israelite under the law could possibly attain to. Abraham knew the Lord only in grace. It was grace which had called him from his idolatry; and it was grace which had made him so many precious promises. And on this ground Abraham could stand before the Lord, and plead with Him for Sodom, although he was himself but dust and ashes. But to man's eye, the service of God connected with the tabernacle, would be by far the most attractive. It would be thought an advance in the order of worship on the rude altar of the fathers. But the order of the tabernacle was, in fact, restriction on the liberty of worship. And yet it is to this that the human mind so constantly and naturally turns. This is the pattern which man proposes for himself; the necessary consequence of which is, that his worship is in the spirit of bondage. A devoted Israelite, though he stood purified as to the flesh, might have looked back with regret on the far happier and nearer worship of the fathers. After all that the high priest had done for him, he could only approach the outside of the tabernacle, he dare not enter within. The law, in all its institutions, preserved that element which was so conspicuous at its promulgation — bounds were set around the mountain, lest the people should break through to gaze. Near and intimate approach to God was unceasingly denied by some divinely appointed bound.

It is, indeed, true, that an Israelite enjoyed nearness to God, when compared with the inhabitants of the nations around him; for the world having fallen into idolatry after the flood, God had given it up to its own lusts; and having called out one nation, and constituted that a nation of worshippers of the true God, He thus distinguished them from all other nations on the earth. Thus Israel nationally stood before the Lord, and worshipped Him, whilst all other nations bowed before their idols. But although, compared with others, Israel stood so high, they were nevertheless denied, by most solemn statutes, free access to the presence of their God. They must approach with measured steps, never passing the appointed limit. There was the outer circle of a worshipping people, and the inner circle of worshipping priests; while, nearest of all, and the only one who durst draw nigh, the high priest ministered alone in the holiest. Thus while Israel, as a nation, was taken from all other nations as God's peculiar heritage and witness, yet it was within that nation that God fixed the clearest testimony, that no way was yet opened into the holiest of all. Distance and restriction were most forcibly taught amidst the only nation brought nigh. But Israel has become corrupt; and as God gave up the Gentiles to their lusts, so has He scattered for a time His chosen nation, and set aside its polity. Now corruption in worship has almost always consisted in re-establishing what God has disowned. Just, therefore, as natural religion is the assertion of

man's ability to take that place before God as a creature, which as a sinner he has lost, so national religion is the return to Judaism which God has disowned. People-worship without, and priest-worship within, is not now the order of God; nor has God now any other worshipping nation, than that which is formed by the whole body of believers, called out of every nation, and people, and tongue, to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But let us come to the tabernacle itself, to learn what is God's present order of worship, and what are the good things to come, which are now freely given to us. We have already noticed, that there were in Israel the worshipping people outside the tabernacle, and the worshipping priests within. It is with the latter we have now to do; for our present good things constitute blessed contrasts, even to the then privileges of the priests themselves. Let us dismiss, therefore, from our minds, the people worshipping without, whilst priestly ministry was accomplished within, and let us fix our attention, as the Holy Ghost in this chapter leads us to do, on the tabernacle itself, and the priestly family serving in its holy places. The tabernacle was of most exquisite beauty. This could be discerned in some degree even by the eye of an outside worshipper. But the holy place, in which the priests habitually ministered, was furnished with the exquisitely wrought golden candlestick, the table of showbread overlaid with gold, and the golden altar of incense. These things their eyes constantly looked upon, and they must have felt that they were amidst things peculiarly belonging to God, though denied entrance into that holy chamber in which God's glory visibly dwelt. They must have always felt near God, though never immediately in His presence. From the holiest of all, the beautiful veil still separated them. Into that most holy place, within which were the golden censer, the ark of the covenant, and the cherubim overshadowing the mercy-seat, they never entered. They had no access to the mercy-seat. There was one indeed, the high priest, who had access even there — who could pass within the veil, and minister before the mercy-seat itself in the actual presence of God. But this was only once a year. At all other times Aaron could only minister among his priestly family in the holy place. Bounds were thus set, not only around, but also within the tabernacle; and set, not only on the priests, but even on the high priest himself.

Now let us well mark the comment of the apostle on this order of worship. "The priests go always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service (of God); but into the second the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people, the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holies hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing."

What could more forcibly testify, that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, than such facts as that none but priests could enter the holy place? and that those very priests, so constantly serving there, could never pass on into the holiest? and again, that the high priest himself must not enter "at all times" into the holiest, but only "once a year?" Enough, indeed, was permitted to constitute the tabernacle, and its order, a "shadow of good things to come;" but that tabernacle ever testified to those who worshipped in it, that it was but a figure for the time then present, and that it knew of no service by which, as to the conscience, they could be made perfect. Its holies were not thrown open even to those who had services appointed them therein: no liberty to go in and out was there allowed; no way to the mercy-seat, free to all, or open at all times, could be found there. The annual solemnity of the great day of atonement must indeed have been bright in prospect, not only to the people and the priests, but to the high priest himself; but after it was over, it must have been a day much regretted, especially to him who had for that day such peculiar

access unto God, but who was afterwards cast into comparative distance from God to exercise his ministry outside the veil. Aaron's privilege was one of very seldom occurrence, only once a year. But the Holy Ghost declares that now the way into the holies is open, through Jesus, the High Priest of good things to come. The redemption found by Aaron in the blood of bulls and goats did not avail to give access to the mercy-seat, nor to purge the worshipper's conscience; but Christ has found "eternal redemption;" and having thereon entered into the true holies, He has become the High Priest of those most precious "good things," liberty and peace in the presence of God. As long as the first tabernacle was standing, these things could not be known — no redemption had been found off which they could be based — no high priest anointed by whom they could be ministered. The whole order of that first tabernacle spoke of restriction, not liberty; and so far from providing purgedness of conscience, its very offerings for sin brought the remembrance of sins upon the offerer. And what then must be the consequence of taking the pattern of that tabernacle as the model for the worship of Christians? Must not the holiest, that is, the very presence of God, be barred against their approach? This must be so, even if they are allowed to be God's holy priesthood. But as this is not allowed, but only a certain class are admitted to be priests, the holy brethren must be denied all place whatsoever within the holies, and kept, like the congregation of Israel, without. Take the tabernacle and its order as the pattern instead of the contrast of christian worship, and these consequences must result; and have they not abundantly resulted? Do we not see the laity without, the priestly clergy within? And are not souls fettered, and consciences unpurged, just as though the High Priest of good things to come had never entered on His blessed ministry at all? But that High Priest has come! He is now the minister of the holy things; and, therefore, the blessed testimony of the Holy Ghost is, that "the good things to come" are present good things to faith. And what "a good thing to come" made present to us, that our abiding-place is now the holies, with the veil rent and thrown open, so that the mercy-seat is ever free to us, and the countenance of God ever lifted up upon us! What a present consequence to us of eternal redemption having been obtained, and of our great High Priest having passed through the heavens! The priests in the tabernacle might have looked back to the freer communion with God enjoyed by the fathers, or they might have looked forward to a still more blessed thing, even the day when Israel shall nationally be a kingdom of priests, according to the promise, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God;" but between these good things past away, and good things not yet come, they stood fettered and unpurged. But what they then looked forward to, as a good thing yet to come, is substantiated to us at present, because Christ has already entered on His ministry as the High Priest of good things to come. All Israel's blessings are suspended on Israel's new order of priesthood — of which priesthood the High Priest alone is actually in His heavenly place of ministry, His fellow-priests (that is, all who believe in His name) approaching there now only because He appears in the presence of God for them. But these priests do now, by faith, enjoy present liberty and perfect peace in that most holy presence, though still, as to fact, sojourning and serving on earth. Israel nationally may be still beneath judicial darkness; the nominal church may be blindly, though industriously, groping amidst its own patterns of God's shadows; but the High Priest of the good things themselves having come, faith receives from His hand its rich and living portion, and renders back its praises unto God. But let us look at other contrasts drawn in this chapter by the Holy Ghost. As to the way in which the holiest of all was entered on the day appointed for that solemn service, how many preliminaries had to be attended to by Aaron! First, he must himself be provided with a sin-offering

and a burnt-offering, as well as take of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin-offering, and one ram for a burnt-offering. Then he had to bring the bullock which was for himself, and to make an atonement for himself and for his house. This being done, he took a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord, and put the incense on it, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat; and under the shelter, and amidst the fragrance of this, he sprinkled the blood of his sin-offering both upon and before the mercy-seat. But his work did not end here. He had to go out again, and to go through the same service for the people, offering their offerings as he had his own. And when the services of that day were completed, he must go out from the holiest, and again be occupied with his ceaseless round of ineffectual offerings — the holiest of all being closed against him until another year had run its course.

1888 106 Now, mark the contrast to all this. "But Christ, being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in ONCE into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption." The Holy Ghost evidently delights to glorify the Lord Jesus. Others might have been anointed, but He is THE Christ — the Anointed One. That appellation belongs to the Son, as it belongs to no other. It is "Christ," then, who is now present\* in his own place of ministry, as, "the High Priest of good things to come." To enter into His place of ministry, He has passed through a far greater and more perfect tabernacle than that through which Aaron passed into his peculiar place of service. Christ has passed through the heavens. Man's hands were not employed to make these; they are the handy-work of God Himself. Christ is gone into heaven itself; there, in the immediate presence of God, He appears for us. On earth He was not a priest; no tabernacle ever existed on earth suited to so great a High Priest as Jesus the Son of God. Man's hands may not rear a place of ministry for this High Priest. His person and His sacrifice demand a sphere of ministry suited to their value, and hence His tabernacle is "not of this creation." The attempt to honour Him with costly things made with hands is to forget the dignity of our High Priest, and the heavenly order of His priesthood.

[\*The word "come" may, possibly, a little embarrass the sense. We have the expression, "came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness;" that is, he was present there preaching.]

Let us remember that He has passed through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not in His own individual right as divine and as perfect, but as a priest in connection with others. Had He entered simply in His own right, He might have demanded entrance, saying, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." But He entered by His own blood, for He passed through as a priest. Aaron, on the great day of atonement, passed through the court and the holy place into the holiest with the basin of blood in his hands: this was the title on which he entered there — even the blood of the sin-offering. Aaron was taught that in this blood there was atonement for the sins of the people for the past year. Now Christ also entered through blood into the true tabernacle; but what says the Holy Ghost of Him whom He delights to honour? "Neither by the blood of bulls and goats, but by His own blood." The blood of bulls was suited to the tabernacle "of this building;" but such blood never could give title to worship in the tabernacle "not made with hands:" the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, is required for that, and He himself also, as high priest, to carry it in. How constantly do we find that our highest blessings rest on the simplest truths! Our happy liberty of worship as saints, and our nearness unto God for ever, hinge on the value before God of the blood of His Son. If we keep at a

distance from God, if our consciences are unpurged in His presence, it is because we underrate the value of that blood, or forget what its once-offering has accomplished.

It is not to be wondered at that men should be ready to turn back to sanctification by ordinances; the flesh would, as it were, naturally cling to any order of things which seemed in any wise to sanction and to sanctify it. A system for the purification of the flesh would be tenaciously retained by the flesh. But God has no such system now. He has tried man under it, and, his utter ruin having been there proved, He has for ever set the flesh aside. Its claims and efforts spring therefore from its ignorance of itself, and of God's ways concerning it. God now has provided not for the flesh but for the conscience. He has no ordinance now by which the flesh may draw, in any degree, nigh: all these ordinances are gone for ever; but He has given His own Son to bring in eternal redemption, and to give present peace and confidence in His presence. Hence God's grand object now is to glorify Jesus. He presents Him to us as the One in whom we shall find every thing we need. And hence Christ must be all or nothing. He must be exalted, and man abased; for if man is set up, Christ has died in vain.

There is not only great power, but also great comprehensiveness in that word ONCE. It shows us that the offering of Jesus once comprised the fulfilment of all the typical sacrifices. Not only that His one sacrifice does this; but that the once offering of that one sacrifice did it. This is often forgotten, and hence many souls lack peace. They trust only the one sacrifice, and so have salvation; but they do not clearly see the effectual power its once offering had to "perfect for ever them that are sanctified," and so have not peace. It is very humbling and very sorrowful that it should be so, because this is the especial testimony of God concerning that once-offered sacrifice; but so it is, nevertheless. Gradual declension in the church opened the door for this practical unbelief, and bad teaching perpetuates it. But let the saints of God remember, that as surely as there is but one Lamb of God, so surely the Lamb can be but once offered; and that, this one sacrifice having been once offered, "there remaineth no more offering for sin."

Aaron, then, had to make many offerings; but Christ, by His once offering of Himself, has put away sin. He has consequently no more priestly work to do as the offerer of sacrifice for sin. To say that He has is to say that He has the cross to go through again as the victim, and that He has again to enter into the holiest by His own blood. And this would instantly nullify God's testimony as to the preciousness of that blood, and the work it has already done. For, I must repeat, His testimony is not merely that Christ's blood alone cleanses from sin, but that the once shedding of that blood has so entirely put away sin, that God now says to all who believe therein, "your sins and iniquities I will remember no more." That the one and once-offered sacrifice of Christ did, because of the preciousness of His blood, fulfil all the typical sacrifices, is indeed plainly seen in Heb 9:14; for we here have that He is set as the fulfilment, not only of the type of the blood offered on the day of atonement, but also as the fulfilment of the ashes of the red heifer. The law had its numberless forms of purification of the flesh, but all these combine to enhance the value of Christ's blood as once shed and once carried in by Him to God. By that one shedding, and one presentation, we have had accomplished for our consciences for ever, what any or all the shadows effected for the flesh for a time. "If," says the Holy Ghost, "the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, Who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? "

What a ransom, then, has Christ found! By that blood which He once shed on the cross, He has put away sin: that blood He has once, and once for all, carried into the true holiest. And must He repeat His work, as did Aaron, as though that blood had, after a little while, lost its efficacy? No. When He comes out again, it will not be to continue or repeat any work for sin, but "unto salvation." He has found eternal redemption, and has entered into the presence of God as a consequence of His having done so. What a blessed alteration in the statute! What Aaron did every year for Israel, and yet never did effectually, Christ has done once for all for us. The saints of God, therefore, stand on the ground of accomplished purification. Just as truly as the ordinances of old did bring a people in the flesh into a certain kind of purification before God, so truly, yea, "much more" so, has that one sacrifice of Christ brought all who believe into the unspeakable and eternal blessing of having "no more conscience of sins." They may realise this, or they may not; but this is what Christ has obtained for them by His one offering. And just, therefore, as it would have been sinful unbelief for an Israelite of old who had touched a dead body, to doubt that the uncleanness was gone when the ordinance of the sprinkled ashes had been observed by him, so is it nothing else than sinful unbelief, for one of God's children now to doubt, that all his sin and guilt has been for ever atoned for and put away by the once offered sacrifice of Christ. Full faith in that sacrifice banishes conscience of sins. God delights in having provided this for us. He would have us serve Him in freedom, not in bondage. He never took pleasure in any sacrifice for sins until one was offered which put sins away for ever, and gave to the consciences of His worshippers peace in His presence. In that holy presence, therefore, we stand realising the everlasting results of Christ's great day of atonement. The question of sin has been met by Him on our behalf — met and settled for ever; and, having put it away, He is now unto us the blessed minister of unmingled and eternal blessing. Christ's present position, and our present blessings, are thus alike the consequences of our sins having been purged. Can any thing be more blessed than this! That we should, through faith, have already entered on our everlasting nearness to God, and are now privileged to know the peace proper to the heavenly sanctuary! The true tabernacle is free to us — as free now as it will be when we stand personally amidst its glories. We belong to that priestly family anointed for its holies; not limited to a holy place, nor serving before a veiled mercy-seat, nor having brief access into the holiest, but made meet for heaven itself, and worshipping with pure consciences in the immediate presence of God! And do we prize as we should this blessing of a purged conscience? Do we discern the peculiar grace marking its bestowment? It was entirely unknown to worshippers under the law; not only unknown to the congregation who worshipped without, but equally so to the priests who served within. That first tabernacle must ever have been a house of bondage to conscience. Conscience can never be purged by what fails to bring nigh unto God. As long as full reconciliation was not known — as long as sin was found more effectual to exclude from God, than sacrifice for sin was to bring nigh to God — so long conscience could have known no purification. And not only people but priests, yea, not only priests but even the high priest, must have had sin, not salvation, brought to remembrance by their constantly recurring sacrifices. Expiation, full and entire expiation, there was not; for had there been, the demand for expiation would have ceased. This thought must have continually forced itself on all worshipping under the shadows; and in proportion as conscience was tender and exercised, so would it be sensible of its unpurgedness. Such might fully understand that the flesh was purified for admission into that tabernacle by the appointed blood of bulls and of goats, while at the same time their consciences might be carrying a load of guilt, for which, in such blood, they found no remedy. But now it is not

merely the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. A purged conscience is, therefore, the distinctive blessing of the saints in this dispensation. A saint who has it not has forgotten, or (it may be through carelessness) has lost what became his, when, by faith, he passed beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel. "No more conscience of sins" is one of the very first good things bestowed on us by our blessed High Priest; and God has provided through Him for its maintenance; for if that be not maintained, God well knows that we cannot worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is the everlasting efficacy of Christ's own blood, once carried in by Himself unto God, which secures this. All we need in order to its constant enjoyment is simple faith in that presented blood. But though all we need in order to a purged conscience is simple faith in what Christ's blood has effected, we are to exercise ourselves to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man; and the saint of God, who, walking in the Spirit, seeks to maintain this good conscience, will be the most sensible of his many defects and failures, and so will most realise the blessedness of the purged conscience provided for him by the blood of Jesus. Such a saint will be quick of sense to detect defilement; he will feel a soil that others are insensible to. Every thing around us is tainted with death. Nature itself is defiled. The very charities of life have power to defile and deaden the soul. And to all this the Holy Ghost, Who dwelleth in us, seeks to make us sensitive. If, therefore, there was not this ever effective provision for purgedness of conscience, the saint walking most in the Spirit would be bowing his head like a bulrush, and in terror before God, because conscious of so many defilements; though to others all would appear so fair and so devoted. Blessed indeed, therefore, to such is the High Priest of good things to come. Blessed lessons, both concerning holiness and concerning sin, does His work for them enable them to learn; for all that they are learning of the purity of God, and of the more subtle and refined deceitfulness of their own hearts, only serves to prove to them the necessity, and to confirm to them the value, of that blood by which they are redeemed and sanctified unto God. These are lessons of which the careless or unexercised soul is ignorant.

Let it be remembered, therefore, that every type of cleansing finds its fulfilment in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is not the work of the Spirit to purify, but to testify to the blood of Christ as purifying. The Holy Ghost comes to the saints as the witness of their cleanness, not as the producer of it. That Christ has already and for ever effected that, is the burden of the Spirit's testimony to conscience: in this the Holy Ghost delights to declare the honour of Jesus. Just, therefore, as we simply receive His testimony, will our consciences be really purged.

I would add that it is not to the great and blessed doctrines of election and the like, or to the unfaillingness of God's purposes, that the Holy Ghost specifically points the conscience in order to its purging, but expressly to God's estimate of the blood of Christ. For other precious purposes He does discourse to the saints on those blessed doctrines; but for the especial purpose of giving and of maintaining a purged conscience, He invariably directs the soul to Christ's blood, as provided by God's infinite love for that very end. The present portion, therefore, of the saints is to be ever in the true tabernacle, and to be there with a purged conscience. He is never an outside worshipper, nor an uncleansed one. Man's best efforts at worship only keep him at a distance from the living God: ordinances, however precious in their place, have the like tendency, just as they are used to bring nigh. This accounts for the ceaseless and restless labour of those who trust to them; for they heap burdens on conscience in the vain effort to relieve it, and entangle themselves but the more in the

trammels from which they struggle to be free. It is the blood of Christ alone which frees from every fetter, and gives, at the same moment, liberty and an everlasting home in the happy presence of God.

Here, then, we have two marvellous blessings connected with the priesthood of Christ: the first, access into the true holies, and abiding there as our ordinary place of worship; the other, perpetual purification of conscience through the blood of Jesus, even on the mercy-seat itself. It is on these two established privileges of the household of faith that our worship depends. But there are other of the good things to come, made present to us through the priesthood of Jesus, mentioned in this chapter. For example: we have a house of worship everlastingly purified. Atonement was made of old for the holy sanctuary, and for the tabernacle of the congregation, as well as for the priests; and we are here told that, as it was necessary that those patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with the then appointed sacrifice, so was it necessary that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than those; "for Christ is not entered into holies made with hand, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Now it is His having gone to appear for us there, which has rendered this purification of the heavenlies necessary. God is not only jealous of His own personal holiness, and so provides for the personal cleanness of those whom He brings into His presence; but He is also jealous of the purity of heaven, His dwelling-place; and hence heaven also is purified by blood, that the entrance of sinners into it may in no wise defile it. And it greatly assures the priestly worshippers to find that they themselves are purified by that same blood, which thus preserves the purity of God's own dwelling-place and throne. One purification avails for all — God's throne, God's temple, God's High Priest, and God's priests! For can we really think of heaven itself being our proper place of worship, without fearing that we may carry defilement into it? Do we not feel that we should tarnish and soil those pure and heavenly courts? Well, God has met this fear too: the true holies cannot be defiled, for they have been purified for ever by the blood of Jesus. Thus has God prepared us for His presence, and His presence for us. All is done. Every plea that unbelief can put forth, for shrinking into the darkness which it loves, is disposed of for ever by this all-effectual blood!

"Having therefore, brethren, liberty to enter into the holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He dedicated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and (having) a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water!" J. L. Harris.

## S. Hormah.

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Hormah.

Num 14:1-45; Deu 1:1-46.

1886 145 The root of sin lies very deep indeed. It is nothing less than the will of man. Hence the great defect in any mere moral judgment as to sin. Such a judgment proceeds on grounds, either of immutable principles of right and wrong, independently of the acknowledgment of God, or on the ground of conventional righteousness, as variable as the several states and conditions of men. Thus, the apostle concludes the detail of practical ungodliness with this sweeping principle: "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom 3:18); and another principle equally broad is found in the words: "They measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It necessarily introduces an element which no system of morals could provide for; namely, suitability of conduct under special circumstances, the right thing to be done at the right time. If we will only allow that there is a supreme will to which every will ought to bow, obedience and disobedience cannot be defined by statutory laws. One alone stands forth in the singular place of obedience — the obedient One — He "Whose ear was opened morning by morning to hear as the learned;" He of Whom it is written, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" He Who Himself said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." We alas! have to say, "We have turned every one to his own way;" our will has not been subject to the will of God. Ever since we have been quickened by His grace, and God has drawn us with cords of love as a man, so that we have come to Jesus, and received Him as made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, we have practically had to "prove what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God," and, in many instances, painfully to learn submission to it.

We are "sanctified unto obedience" of Jesus Christ, as well as unto the sprinkling of His blood (1Pe 1:2). As servants of Christ, we are "servants of obedience unto righteousness." It is by the knowledge of this principle that we get so deep an insight into what sin really is in the sight of God. It is our wilfulness. That is the interpretation which the exercised soul is enabled to put on many of the dealings of God with His children. Men and Christians see the outside of one another, and judge accordingly; God judges the heart, and searches the reins. Is it right or allowable? is the question with man. Is it obedience? is the question with God.

There is nothing which so draws the line between spirituality and sentiment, and indeed prevents spirituality from degenerating into mystic refinement, as the realizing that the Holy Ghost, Who, in quickening our souls, has created in us new feelings and desires, is the Spirit of truth, and, whilst presenting truth objectively to the soul, sanctifies by the means of it. "God hath chosen us unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The whole course of a Christian should be truthful. The very basis of Christianity is truth — the truth of what we are in ourselves, and of what God is as revealed to us in Christ. Our starting point is the recognition of our real position before God — sinners, helpless, ruined, and righteously exposed to the wrath of

God. When, by the quickening power of the Spirit of God, we are brought to take this truthful place, the controversy is over between us and God: He justifies us freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Starting from this on our walk as Christians, if we sin, the truthful place is confession, and then again God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. A large measure of the needed discipline of God is to bring us to this truthful place: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

We may learn a solemn and profitable lesson from redeemed Israel; redeemed indeed only outwardly, but still answering the gracious end to us of admonition by that which happened to them. The distinguishing grace of God had been shown to Israel in the blood of the paschal lamb in Egypt. They had seen the glorious triumph of the Lord on their behalf, in leading them through the Red sea as on dry land, and the utter destruction of their enemies in endeavouring to follow them. They had known the grace of God in sweetening the waters of Marah and in providing shade and refreshment in the wilderness. They had murmured also; but their murmurings had been answered in grace, bread being given to them from heaven, and quails sent in abundance. They tempted the Lord; but He answered them by causing water to gush out of the flinty rock. They had fought against Amalek, and prevailed through the hands of Moses upheld in intercession. The grace of God had abounded over all their sin, up to the moment of their receiving the law by the disposition of angels. Moses is called up to the Lord in the mount, to receive from the Lord ordinances for them of divine service. They forgot Moses, and set up gods for themselves to go before them. This sin is answered in the terrible judgment inflicted on their brethren by the children of Levi, and the plague of the Lord. They had seen the tabernacle reared and filled with the glory of the Lord. The cloud, the witness of the presence of Jehovah in the midst of them, now took its place as their guide through the wilderness. Their holy priesthood had been consecrated before them, and when the fire fell on the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord appeared, they had shouted and fallen on their faces. They had also witnessed the same "consuming fire" vindicating the holiness of the Lord in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu. The stoning of the sabbath-breaker and of the blasphemer, at the commandment of the Lord, proved that He was judge Himself; and prophecy of judgment in case of disobedience, and mercy after humiliation and repentance, close the eventful year of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.

"In the fourteenth day of the first month, Israel kept the passover at the commandment of the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai." What a retrospect for Israel to look back through a year to the blood sprinkled on the door-posts and lintels of their houses in Egypt — the angel of the Lord dealing destructive judgment all around, and they feasting peacefully within! May our souls know abidingly the blessed reality of this deeply interesting figure!

"On the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony, and the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai: and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran." But they leave there the record of their sin and of the judgment of God in the names Taberah and Kibroth-hattaavah, "the burning" of the fire of the Lord, and "the graves of lust." It is from Paran that the spies are sent to search the land, and bring also of the fruit of it. Israel had known the bondage of Egypt and deliverance from it by the outstretched arm of Jehovah, and that arm was not shortened, so that it could not bring them to the land promised to their fathers. But how graciously does Jehovah condescend to their

weakness in commissioning Moses to "send men that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel." They searched it without any molestation for forty days, and "brought back word unto them and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land." But the report of the strength of the people and of walled cities was more readily received than the report of the goodness of the land, although they had such a sample of its goodness before their eyes. Vain are the remonstrances of Caleb and Joshua. The ten who accompanied them in searching the land brought up a slander on the land; the congregation first murmur and despise the pleasant land, and take counsel to "make themselves a captain and to return into Egypt." Caleb and Joshua again remonstrate; Moses intercedes; but the Lord sets Himself against their rebellion, and makes their unbelief to be the punishment of their sin. "Tomorrow, turn you and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea." Thus thwarted in the wilderness in one way, they evince it in another. The same people who yesterday, (with the presence of the Lord with them, and the fruit of the land before them) refused, at the commandment of the Lord, to go up and possess the land, become bold in disobedience, now that the Lord commands them to turn again the way of the Red sea. Their wilfulness would fain surmount any difficulties. The sons of Anak had lost their terror and walled cities their strength in their eyes, and they themselves had grown from grasshoppers to giants the moment the will of the Lord thwarted their will. Such ever is man's boasted freedom of will — miserable freedom indeed, to have a will always opposed to "the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God." It is freedom of a sort; but what a freedom! "When ye were servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness."

"And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up to the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up to the land which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned." Only yesterday they had said, "Let us make a captain and return into Egypt," and the Lord had answered, "Tomorrow turn you, get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea." But now in very wilfulness they confess sin and plead the promise of the Lord; strange but faithful picture of the deceitfulness, as well as the desperate wickedness of the heart! And Moses said, "Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper." Their pleading the Lord's promise, and confession of sin was in this instance only the prelude to presumptuous sin. The Lord is not with them, and their wilful boldness ends in discomfiture. They presumed to go up unto the hill top, "and the Amalekites came down . . . and smote them and discomfited them, even unto Hormah." Do we know any thing like this in the secret experience of our own souls? When Christians, through the grace of God, have attained to a measure of blessing, and then cease from following on to know the Lord; when the heart secretly turns back to the world, out of which we have been rescued by Christ giving Himself for our sins; when the difficulties of the way present themselves more prominently than the rest and glory which God Himself has set before us, then we may be assured that the evil heart of unbelief is at work, and there has been departure from the living God. Declension has manifestly set in. Christ is dishonoured, and the pleasant land despised. The necessary consequence is discipline from the Father, discipline even to the scourge, because of His love. The stroke is felt, and intended to be felt. It may bring disgrace on us in our own eyes, and in the eyes of others also. It is hard for us to be turned back.

We are just like wayward children. How well we can understand the reply of Israel, "Lo, we be here," to the announcement, "Turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea!" They could not bear to lose, as it were, so much ground, and to traverse the wilderness

afresh. They would go up from where they were, but it cannot prosper; neither was it the Lord's way, nor was He with them; their attempt failed, and ended in discomfiture and deeper disgrace. The Lord will have us back to the cross that we may start afresh with Him. We must learn that, after all our progress, we are nothing better than sinners saved by grace. It is on this point that the controversy so frequently turns between the Lord and ourselves. We refuse to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. We allow that we have sinned, but desire to go on as though we had not. This is not obedience but presumption.

We do not undo wrong, by doing what appears to us to be right, but by justifying God in confession, and taking the place which He assigns to us. The same God who, by His grace, has made as every thing, and given us every thing in Christ, the moment we cease to value that, by looking to our own attainments, will in very faithfulness make us feel our nothingness. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." He is ever able to come in when we are humble, and work for His own name's sake. But He has no name to meet us while, in the pride of our hearts, we insist on maintaining a position. He can, in such case, only resist us. Are we indeed "cast down?" He can reveal Himself as "God who comforteth those who are cast down." Are we in tribulation? He is able to come in as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort." Let us get down as low as may be before God, He has ever in reserve some part of His own name to reveal and meet us.

But, if "we walk contrary unto God," so that "He walks contrary to us" — till this be acknowledged, and "the punishment of our iniquity be accepted," God is still in the attitude of a registrar. How pointedly does Moses, in narrating to "the generation to come" the ways of their fathers who had perished in the wilderness, present this principle! "Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight, for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you, and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites which dwelt in that mountain came out against you and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you." (Deu 1:1-46 :)

"Ye were presumptuous, and went up." Solemn admonition indeed! Well we may say: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults: keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." Israel presumed on the promise of the Lord, and on their own confession of sins; and at the same time "rebelled against the commandment of the Lord." Presumptuous sin appears specially the danger of God's own accredited people. It is doing that which makes for our own credit, rather than that which is for the honour of Christ. In this there may be no moral element which the natural conscience can discern. There may even be the apparent confession of sin; and boldness of action in pleading the promise of God, humility and dignity outwardly presented, and yet God not acknowledged at all.

It is the exercised soul which cries: "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sin." Caleb and Joshua, faithful in the midst of unfaithfulness, not only reported well of the land, but felt their strength to be doing "the will of God." "If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land,

and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey: only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not; but all the congregation ha de stone them with stones." The Lord was not with those who presumptuously went up the hill; but those who, like Caleb and Joshua, had known the presence of the Lord as their only strength and security, in going up when He commanded to go up, would equally find it to be their strength and security to turn back the way of the Red sea, when the Lord so commanded. The Lord was still with them. And what did Caleb and Joshua learn by their turning back with the others, but fresh lessons of the abounding of the grace of God over the sin of Israel? Disappointed of entering Canaan from Kadesh-barnea, it all turned to gain in entering by "a way they had not passed heretofore." For when "the soles of the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rested in the waters of Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off from the waters that came down from above: and they stood on a heap: and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground." The Lord did not turn back His faithful servants, Caleb and Joshua, with their unfaithful brethren, to no profit. They witnessed indeed the fall in the wilderness of all their generation after less than forty years; but they had learnt the blessings of Aaron's rod which budded; they had witnessed the saving power of the wondrous ordinance of the brazen serpent; they had proved too that no enchantment could prevail against Israel. And thus richly freighted with the knowledge of the blessings of a present God even in the wilderness, an entrance was abundantly ministered unto them into Canaan, through the prevailing power of a present God manifested by the means of priestly service.

1886 161 "Turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the Red sea." Does it seem hard to us to do so? If there has been failure and declension, only let us come back in simplicity of faith to our starting point, the cross of Christ, and then we too shall learn, as Caleb and Joshua, afresh and more deeply how the Lord hath triumphed gloriously. Humbled, if needs be, in the eyes of others, bowing submissively under their taunts, receiving all as a part of the discipline we need, and, oh! how light compared with our folly. God shows Himself as an upbraiding God. "He giveth grace to the humble." All the progress we have made in the knowledge of divine things, in which we have complacently rested, is not to be compared with the deeper lesson of the grace of God, yet to be learnt in the cross and from the cross. It may seem to us to be only the shame of retracing our steps; but it is in reality to go on with God, learning fresh manifestations of His grace in Christ Jesus; it is to find a reality in the very truths which we had only superficially handled before; for real Christian progress is characterised by our estimate of great essential truths — truths connected with, and flowing from, the person of Christ. "That I may know Him." Is it a weariness to learn more experimentally the value of the ever-blossoming, fruit bearing priestly ministry of our Jesus — a ministry so immediately flowing from His person? Starting indeed from the cross, and, keeping near the cross, it is blessed to learn its value, as Israel knew the brazen serpent, the last resource of the grace of God in the wilderness; for as surely as Jesus Himself is the Alpha and Omega, so also is the cross to us the first and the last great doctrine of God. It is well too to learn when all can find fault, and the finger of scorn is held up at the failure of God's people, and they cry insultingly: "There, there, so would we have it," that the charge shall not lie against us, for it is God that justifieth. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." These and other lessons are to be learnt in thus turning again by the way of the Red Sea — by humbling, instead of justifying, ourselves — by really confessing sin, instead of resolutely maintaining a position — by knowing rather the comfort of the Lord's presence, in being, as it

were, turned back in apparent disgrace, than presenting a strong front, and going on without God. All effort to maintain a position to which even the grace of God has led, but the maintenance of which (instead of the maintenance of Christ's honour) has become the object, must end in discomfiture. It is presumptuous sin. And if Christians will refuse to turn back at the bidding of God, and to humble themselves under His mighty hand, in order to drink more deeply into the riches of His grace, God will resist them; and what will the end be?

There is one lesson to be learnt under every failure and disappointment; namely, death and resurrection. The Lord Jesus Himself might say as to Israel, "I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for naught, and in vain;" but let His own death and resurrection come in, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." His servant Paul had to say, at the close of his ministry: "This thou knowest, that all they which be in Asia are turned away from me;" but, however he might feel disappointment even keenly, yet his labour in the Lord was not in vain, and still the sure foundation of the Lord standeth. And in our days, those who have laboured for the Lord, and been disappointed in the result, have they learnt nothing? Has not disappointment taught them death and resurrection? Has it not tended to bring back the soul in solemn review, and to see the need of death to be written on much of their service, which had not Christ simply for its object? Cannot they justify God for their disappointment? But their labour is not in vain in the Lord. Disappointment at Kadesh-barnea led to a triumphant entrance through Jordan.

Oh! that we all knew better how to get into the place of blessing: it must be a very low place indeed. Many a goodly pretension will there have to be given up; no position of credit in the eyes of others must be sought to be maintained. We must justify God in all His righteous judgment. Then controversy is over, and we shall prove Israel's God to be our God, "Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever." And although death and disappointment have been written on our fondest expectations, it is only to teach us not "to trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver." The very sense of deep need will only open more clearly the fulness of Jesus, and we shall have learnt, by our inexhaustible experience, to keep more close to the Spring-head of living waters, by finding the cisterns we had hewn out for ourselves broken and incapable of holding any water.

J. L. Harris.

## S. Religious Societies.

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### Religious Societies.

There are two great subjects of interest to which any one taught of God must necessarily be awakened — the glory of God, and the necessities of man. In Jesus we perceive the most acute sensibility to the wretchedness of man: He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, — sighing, groaning, and weeping at the dominion of evil and misery over man. But whilst He met it in all the sovereign power of relief, He so met it that men should glorify God, and thus made the occasion of ministering to man's necessities, the occasion of bringing glory to God. In this as well as other particulars He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are apt to have a much quicker perception of the necessities of man than of the glory of God. It is the Spirit alone which can make us of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, while our own natural selfishness enables us in some measure to enter into man's necessities. We see them as being ourselves in them, as those which personally affect us. Jesus saw them indeed, as in them, but yet with the judgment of One Who saw them from above. Hence it is, that whenever the church has been awakened to a sense either of the pressing necessities of the world around it, or of its own deficiencies, it has in the one case been busy in doing, rather than zealous to repent; and in the other, more ready to engage in some active exertions to mitigate or remedy the pressing necessity, by the means it found readiest at hand, than to ascertain what might be God's way of meeting it. The end proposed has alone been to remedy the destitution felt, or misery discovered; and if this end has in any wise been answered, by God's blessing vouchsafed, the church has been satisfied, and too often has rested in complacency in its own efforts, and made them the criterion of its prosperity, instead of finding the evidence of its failure, both in the necessity which called them forth, and in the dereliction of many important principles of truth which the exertion of those efforts has entailed.

It is impossible not to trace the origin of the many Religious Societies, which have arisen within the last hundred years, to an awakened sensibility about the spiritual destitution around us. Nor can we deny that it was the Spirit of God which put the desire into the hearts of the good and holy men from whom they originated. They were begun in faith and prayer, and little perhaps did any of their founders anticipate to what a magnitude they would grow. One can hardly now, except by history, trace the origin of the Bible Society to the concern of an obscure individual, in the principality of Wales, for the pressing want of the Scriptures in that part of the kingdom. The want when made known became a palpable object, and led to the discovery that many other places were equally destitute of the Scriptures. Many were the motives that induced to a co-operation in such an undertaking. But the object, though in itself confessedly good, was only to meet the necessity discovered. For this many were associated; but when the test of that very word was applied to them — to own God in their associate character, it was discovered not only that many would not, but that they could not; for there were those associated together who did not worship the same God. Notwithstanding the question raised on this point for a moment seemed to shake its stability, yet the Society still continues, because its immediate object is answered: translations of the

Scriptures are multiplied, and Bibles are widely distributed. That good is done is not denied, and that God works in the sovereignty of His grace by all means is most fully allowed. But the real question to be considered is, how far the children of the kingdom should rest satisfied with any religious society, with any society where moral influences are exerted upon the minds of men, unless it be simply based upon the principles which the apostles have developed, as those which are to regulate the association of the children of God. And how far will God be satisfied with anything short of this for the accomplishment of His end? This, while it includes man's blessing, is always His own glory. A society so constituted, would be the church in its varied work and labour of love. And is not this the deficiency, the necessary deficiency of all religious societies — that they fall short of what the church is, and therefore can never effect that which the church can only accomplish?

Whilst therefore the many societies which have arisen, based on more or less catholic principles, have evidenced an awakening desire among many christians for unity in service, have they not very much tended to blind the mind to the simple truth, that such a desire can only be answered by God's own plan — the church? Now the very differential character of a (so called) religious society, is, that it need not be a communion of saints. The end proposed does not necessarily require that it should be. It is in its very constitution an appeal to the world, and therefore must needs meet the world's principles. Now the world's judgment is never the judgment of faith. They expect results, and will not labour except when the object can be commended to their minds as plainly attainable and worthy. Hence it necessarily follows that, in addressing the world, success is to be looked for and proved, in order to establish the utility of the effort; and thus the great moral feature of the church's obedience — viz., to walk by faith, "to go out not knowing whither," when God's glory calls, is altogether lost, and expediency usurps the place of uncompromising obedience to the word of God. It is not therefore the defects in the constitution of any particular religious society, which render it questionable how a christian can rightly unite in its efforts. But the obstacle is this, that such societies are in themselves objectionable, because they are not the approved mode of God's agency, however we may rejoice in their objects. That they may succeed in part is possible and likely.

God is accustomed to compassionate our ignorance and to bless the endeavours of His people, so long as the light which He dispenses is faithfully obeyed; and He may have blessed these societies in removing many stumbling blocks which hindered the progress of the saints, and in leading them to a less exceptionable basis of co-operation than they had previously attained. Nevertheless, while they are societies formed on self-chosen principles, for the attainment of one particular end, and whilst they judge of their prosperity as that end is, or is not, obtained, they have not the character which the word of God requires; they fall short of that real union of brethren which is good and pleasant — good in the sight of God, and pleasant to the saints themselves. This may further be illustrated by facts. — The question raised as to prayer in the Bible Society, opened the eyes of many to perceive, that, whilst they were associated for a religious object, they were not pursuing it in a religious way. This led to a separation. And the same object was pursued by those who separated in a way of prayer, and of confessing to the name of Jesus, by requiring faith in the Trinity, as a necessary requisite to membership. The great difficulty generally understood to have been found by the pious individuals engaged in forming the new society, was the danger of forming a church. That the effort of forming a society on really Scriptural grounds

had this tendency, was made very apparent by the fact of some of its first able and zealous promoters drawing back when they perceived whereunto it would grow, and that they were in that instance really acting on a principle which condemned themselves. The very same principle contended for, separation from heretics, and godly co-operation as needful for the pursuance of an end where God's glory was concerned, was ably turned against the promoters of the new society by the advocates of the old. We cannot but mark the hand of God in this, in making the effort instrumental in opening the minds of many to a more just apprehension of the fellowship of the saints, both in worship and service. But the fears of the founders of the society were groundless. There was one hindrance to approximation too closely to a church form; and this was, that there was something besides the possession of the one spirit necessary to membership — money. The subscriber of a certain sum fixed as minimum, if he would confess to the Trinity, was registered as a member; and thus whilst a barrier was raised against the free admission of every saint who might desire to co-operate, but could not by reason of his inability to pay the required sum, the door was sufficiently widened to admit the worldly professor, or even the profane.

Allowing the zeal and piety of the managers of this society, it may be asked, have they not reversed the order of their most blessed motto, and given to beneficence towards man the priority over God's glory? and if we waive the objection as to the non-exclusion of the worldly or profane, and suppose that they can meet as those who in sincerity worship and serve the Lord, there is yet one very simple way in which it may be shown, that this society (for the institution of which we may be thankful) does still stop short of the one great principle of union. The society meets, its scriptural character is set forth, its principle is extolled for its catholicity. The souls, it may be, of many are refreshed by the fervour and spirituality of those who address them; but if the question were put, Can those who seem so united meet together in the Lord's appointed ordinance of fellowship — the Lord's supper, the answer is, No! For the object of man's necessities primarily, and God's glory indeed remotely, they can unite, but for God's glory in His own appointed way they cannot; and why? Because they are a society, whose end is answered stopping short of this; but where God's own glory is concerned — that is, in the oneness of His children, where His own appointed way is proposed, immediately difficulties arise, and a sectarian spirit is still manifested, and the lauded catholicity is found to be ill-grounded. (To be continued.)

1890 25 From this brief statement it is hoped that the question may be raised in the minds of some, not whether a society be properly constituted and properly managed, but whether it is God's own means of acting; and to help to form a judgment there are some few considerations to be added. Only let it be again repeated, that in anything said here it is not intended to deny that God has blessed and owned them. But since their principle is unchangeable, if this is faulty, we are not to set down that to the society\* which is only ascribable to the sovereignty of God's grace, using any means according to the good pleasure of His will.

[\*This is true as applied to the many parties into which the church has split. Surely God has blessed them all, but this is no approval of their sectarian constitution.] And first, these societies have doubtless been very useful to the church in setting before it those works on which it ought to be engaged, and in stirring up much individual energy. But this has been greatly counterbalanced by the use which has been made of them, as if they had arisen from a healthy state of the church, instead of owing their existence entirely to its failure in its own bounden duty. The existence of so many societies for religious purposes has been hastily and unwarrantably assumed to be a ground

for congratulation; whereas the object of them all would have been attained by the healthful state of the church in itself, in holy separation from the world, through the energy of the indwelling Spirit dispensing the streams of life. Men have united and concentrated their power for some present temporal object; and christians have followed their wisdom, and have almost practically forgotten that, although worldly objects of pursuit may be obtained by worldly association, yet is there one thing, without which christian service can never be fully, or other than partially effective, and this is the power of the Holy Ghost.

It is very much to be feared that an active and busy zeal, stirred up by the means of societies, has helped on very fearfully the error of the church in rejecting virtually its present portion, the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost. "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord." It is the necessary consequence, when we are looking to our own multiplied means, to say we are rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and not to know that we are poor, and blind, and miserable, and naked. It is an important consideration, exemplified in the conduct of the Jews during our Lord's ministry, that there may be much bustle and activity even apparently about the things of the Lord, and yet lukewarmness in reference to the Lord Himself, and rapid progress toward the consummation of apostacy.

Connected with this is another evil, which is, that the society instead of a means soon becomes an end. It is its prosperity that is looked to. The end of its agency and ramifications is, that the society may flourish. Now if a society be not God's way of advancing His own glory, however excellent it may be for the end it proposes, the moment that it becomes the object to sustain and to support, an opening is made for the flesh in all its rivalry and self-seeking. Besides, the maintenance of the society, being almost unconsciously the object of its agency, must lead to a certain kind of worldly prudence which would conceal its miscarriages, and only put forth its success. For example, we read of one case it may be of deep interest, and are and ought to be thankful for it; yet that one case is stated in an isolated manner, and we have not before us at all a fair statement of the proceedings of the society. Now in the church, if it flourishes, it becomes what God set it to be, His witness in a dark world. It does not flourish from any power extrinsic to itself, or from any adventitious circumstances, but from the energy of the Spirit working mightily in it; and it is impossible to seek the prosperity of the church, without seeking the glory of God. And the blessing of the church is, that its resources are from within: if it goes without itself to the world for aid, it virtually forgets that God is its strength; and the practical result of this seeking after outward resources has been to exclude the help of God.

Again it may be said, that religious societies have been the means of calling into activity much energy, which would otherwise have remained dormant. And this is doubtless true; and we have seen not only the acknowledgment of lay co-operation, but likewise the strange inconsistency of lay management\* in societies, which would hesitate about the propriety of employing an unordained missionary. But however this may have tended to disabuse some minds of the prejudice that every thing of a religious nature was to be done through a clergy, it has been one of the evils arising from the management of a society, that it has greatly tended to lower the value of church order. In the church, those who rule and have the control of things affecting the well-being of the church are not elected or supplanted by others who may be chosen to succeed them. In a communion of saints, there may be one only with the gift of rule, or there may be several; but if they have grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, they cannot be superseded by

others having even the like gift in a greater measure. There would be room for the different exercise of all the gifts; and thankfully should they be received. The disposition of these things is in the hands of the Lord; but is this recognised in the constitution of any society?

[\*The word Lay is used here, not as allowing the propriety of the distinction between Clergy and Laity, which is not recognised in the New Testament, but only as to the fact.] The entire management of religious societies is left to the control of a Committee, or a board of directors. Now a Committee, or directory, is that which has suggested itself to worldly prudence, as the readiest and easiest way of furthering its own plans. Christians have therefore in this instance borrowed from the world. They have not the power to delegate the government of themselves, in the things in which they are engaged, if indeed they be the things of God, to those in whom they may choose to confide. True it is indeed, that according to apostolic rule and practice, where money was concerned, it was left to the people to select those gifted of God as competent for the service (see Acts 6:1-15 :, 1Co 16:3-4, 2Co 8:19-20). But the Committee of a religious society is entrusted with far more than a faithful application of its funds. Looking at religious societies, either as Bible or Missionary societies, the committee have the control of translations in the one, a most important work indeed, and of the missionaries in the other, which is equally important. Now these functions are the very highest in the church, and yet they are formally delegated from year to year to a nominated committee. Surely such a proceeding at once shows, that they are not recognised as so placed of God; for if they were, there needed not the renewal of their commission. And then to whom do the Committee so constituted stand in immediate responsibility? If they held any church place, their responsibility would at once be to the source from whence their power was derived — that is, the great Head of the church Himself. But however fitted and gifted, even by Him, a number of individuals forming a committee might be for the execution of so important a trust, yet being dependent on annual choice for their existence, the sense of direct responsibility to Him is much deadened; and, what is of importance too, it tends to induce forgetfulness of individual responsibility, "as every man hath received the gift, so minister the same, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

It is a serious consideration for Christians to weigh well the question, whether either in appointing a committee or being appointed to it, they are not indirectly interfering with the Headship of the Lord. For what office recognised of Him does a committee hold? what gifts given by Him does it pretend to? In fact the constitution of societies has necessarily given rise to very lax\* notions on the point of church government, as if it were a matter left either to our tastes, or will, or convenience. And it may be soberly said, that the powers which a committee pretends to exercise are unheard of in the church, such as the college of apostles never thought of asserting, — viz., so completely controlling the agency it employs, as effectually to hinder the liberty of the Spirit of God. If the Spirit should now as plainly forbid a missionary to preach the gospel in a given region, as Paul was forbidden to preach it in Asia, the Committee might still say, That is your sphere, there you must remain, till we tell you to move. And this is not hypothetical; a society constituted as religious societies are, seeks to carry into a heathen land the arrangements it has for religious instruction in its own country. A station is selected by the Committee — a missionary sent forth — a mission house and chapel built — a school established; but after years of labour the preaching has not been found to be owned of God. The missionary cannot shake off the dust of his feet and go where a door may have been opened of the Lord, because the society has now a property in

the station; and it is no uncommon thing in India to see men of God tied down to a station by the assimilation of their labour to the model of an establishment, whose love of souls would lead them to declare the glad tidings to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. And this hindrance to the liberty of the Spirit almost necessarily arises from the constitution of a religious society.

[\*The high-church feeling of the late Mr. Vaughan, of Leicester, led him to relinquish his connection with the Church Missionary Society, as the secretary to the local association, because the society was not under church government: a right principle, though in a wrong place; and it illustrates the point.]

1890 34 The utter insubjection of the minds of Christians to real church authority in the Spirit has doubtless been materially helped on by the introduction of the worldly expedient of a committee into a society professedly religious. Nor does the evil end here. We find among the agents of the several societies many able and gifted individuals; but in their place as agents or secretaries of societies, what are they as given of the Lord? Are they apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, or evangelists? Surely not — they hold no church office at all. It is no office given of the Lord or owned of Him. Nothing surely but being misled by the desire of doing good could possibly have induced so many men of piety to put themselves in so anomalous a position. It need hardly be added, that the constant habit of appealing to a worldly auditory leads them for the most part into very low and meagre statements of truth; and some have not thought it beneath them to amuse their hearers, instead of simply stating what God has wrought. The mischief arising from this entire disregard of church office and church order,\* through the setting aside of both by societies, is incalculable.

[\*The substitution of an order in the flesh for office in the Spirit, and attempted uniformity for order in the Spirit, has been the sin of Popery, and of the Establishment in this country — a sin surely of which many are unconscious; and yet, startling as it may be to some, affecting the question of the headship of Christ to the church, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church.] But then it may be said what are the saints to do? Now the object of this paper is rather to awaken enquiry as to the wrongness of their present means, that they may seek to ascertain the way of the Lord more perfectly, than to say, Here is a perfect plan into which you may at once come. There is a perfect plan, God's own plan — His own society — the church; but who can say we have attained unto it? And that which is specially intended to be pressed on the minds of God's children is, that the very existence of the societies in question is a proof of the fallen and low state of the church, and calling for humiliation and sorrow, rather than congratulation. The word surely is, "Be zealous and repent."

There is one simple way however of proceeding, and that is, immediately, without regard to consequence, to leave off doing evil. Let the children of God separate from the unholy and disobedient, and conform their plans, not to the judgment of man, but to the mind of Christ. But further, the church has been shown its deficiencies and lack of service, and bounden duty. Let it importunately seek of the Lord of the harvest to send forth missionaries both at home and abroad, men of faith and prayer, and simply dependent on the Holy Spirit, without the expensive machinery of a society taking upon itself to send them. If there are such to be found — those whose desire it is, constrained by the love of Christ, to go forth to the heathen, taking nothing of them; assuredly the children of God will be ready to help them on their way after a godly sort, that they may be fellow-workers to the truth\* (2Jn 1:6-8). But let them not go forth thus provided only, but likewise in

the fullest sympathy of the church, and strengthened with all the counsel and wisdom, that the Lord may have given to it in any of His servants, so that they might feel assured that in their difficulties they were not alone. Thus would they be made to feel their entire dependence on God, and at the same time perfect liberty of giving themselves up to the guidance of His Spirit, whilst the knowledge of a loving and watchful oversight on the part of others would alike tend to check the hastiness, or stir up the sluggishness, of the flesh. And so also as to Bibles: — have Christians done well in letting the sacred deposit committed to them out of their hands? Are translations of the scriptures to be entrusted to the superintendence of those who do not stand as acknowledged to have received those gifts by which the church is edified? Persons are often placed in this position of most solemn responsibility from their rank, influence, wealth, or learning, none of which renders a man competent to judge of a version of the Scriptures. All that are spiritual do know how that the exercise of the mere cultivated human understanding is disposed to draw inferences from the word of God which that word itself forbids. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth; even as Jesus is the truth itself, and the Spirit alone can guide into all truth. It is sorrowfully known from the agitation of the question, how little the real inspiration of the Scriptures is held by men of decided piety, and how soon and how easily such a principle would lead men to be content with a paraphrase instead of a translation.

[\*Help may indeed be received from anyone who chooses to proffer it, but none is to be solicited from the world.]

Let not however the mischiefs arising from the constitution of societies be used as a cloke for slothfulness, — hindering the saints from undertaking in God's own way the work they have engaged in. The foolishness of God is wiser than man. Let it therefore be shown that, with much less of palpable display, the work is more effectually done, when only undertaken in the Spirit and for God's glory, than when undertaken with the most promising human means for an end, however good, short of it.

Again let it be repeated that, in nothing that has been said, is there the intention of speaking to the disparagement of any religious society. The aim of this paper is to show merely that it is not God's way of proceeding. Let us most thankfully own, that their objects are of very deep importance, and rejoice in the measure of good they have effected. Let us again also see in them how gracious God is, in bearing with the experiments of our own wisdom, and in leading us by His gentleness, through our own failures, to the knowledge of His truth and of His ways. J. L. Harris.

## S. The Apostleship of Paul

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The Apostleship of Paul The book of the Acts of Apostles is rather the book of the acts of Peter and of Paul, the apostle of the circumcision, and the apostle of the Gentiles. In the events recorded in that part of it which gives us Peter's ministry (that is, Acts 1:1-26 — 12), I judge that we can discern such an order and meaning as prepares us for the Lord's further purposes among the Gentiles by the subsequent ministry of Paul. I would thus briefly notice and interpret these events.

1. — While waiting, according to the commandment, for the promised power from on high, the disciples, under the leading of Peter (constituted chief in the Jewish ministry, Luk 22:32; John 21:16), commit it to the Lord to fill up the vacant bishopric of Judas. This was needful, as I shall observe more particularly by-and-by, that the Jewish order of twelve apostles might stand full and complete; and that this was done with the full intelligence of the mind of God, appears further from this that the Lord seems at once to undertake what His servants thus commit to Him, for He honours the lot (the Jewish form of discovering the divine will in such matters, Jos 19:10; 1Ch 24:5; Num 26:55), and Matthias is numbered with the eleven apostles; and the Holy Ghost in the next chapter seems to adopt Matthias in his new office, by falling upon him equally with the rest without any rebuke.

2. — 7. — The number being thus filled up, the Holy Ghost is given according to promise; and Peter again takes the lead, and preaches the risen Jesus to the Jews. The enmity of the Jews, however, sets in, and proceeds through these chapters, increasing gradually, just as it had done before against the Lord. The apostles, however, like their Lord, go on with their testimony undismayed; great grace is upon all holy discipline keeps them pure — and with great power the apostles give the testimony to the resurrection. But as the enmity had worked against the Lord till they crucified Him, so now does it work against the apostles, till they run upon Stephen and stone him. And as the heavens had received the crucified One, so do the heavens open to His fellow-sufferer and witness. And in him the church receives a living pledge that the heavenly glory was for her as well as for her Lord, for the world had now rejected both.

8. — This being so, Jerusalem could no longer receive the sanction of God, for it had fully declared its sin, and for a season must be cast out of His sight. The disciples are therefore now scattered from Jerusalem, and the Jewish order is disturbed. This chapter giving us the acts of one who had been sent forth, neither as from Jerusalem nor by the apostles at all. Philip goes forth and at first preaches Christ in Samaria, and is then sent down by the Spirit "to Gaza, which is desert," to bring to the flock a lost sheep that was still straying there, but known to God before the foundation of the world. But immediately afterwards he is borne by the spirit to Azotus (the place next to the desert where men and women could be found), that he might proclaim there, and in all other places, the grace which says, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Thus by his mission to Gaza, and then by his rapture to Azotus, Philip's ministry is made to signify the sovereignty and universality of that grace which the Lord was to publish.

9. — The channels for the life and power that is from the Son of God to flow in among the Gentiles were now fully opened; for Jews, Samaritans, and Proselytes, had now been called. All was ready for the gathering of the first-fruits of the Gentiles. But before this was done, and present judgment upon Israel thus publicly sealed, the Lord gives, in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a sign of the future conversion of Israel (see 1Ti 1:16). A sample, no doubt it is, of that longsuffering that saves every sinner. But Israel is to be made the great final witness of that longsuffering, and is principally pointed at by this sign; and therefore all that accompanies this great event is a foreshowing of the things that are hereafter to mark and accompany the repentance of Israel. Saul's looking on Him whom he (not personally, of course, but as one of the nation) had pierced — his being shut up three days without sight, and neither eating nor drinking — the removal of this judgment, and his baptism, all shows us the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem looking on Him whom they pierced, and mourning, every family apart, and their wives apart, and then proving the virtues of the cleansing fountain opened for their sin and for their uncleanness. Jerusalem will then be the signal witness of sovereign grace, as Saul now is (Zec 12:1-14; Zec 13:1-9). And in further proof of this mystical character of Saul's conversion, we may observe that he tells us himself, that he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief; and this is the very ground of final mercy to Israel; as the Lord prayed for them, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (See also Acts 3:17.)

10. — 11. — A pledge of Israel's future conversion being thus left them, proclamation of present judgment upon them is made by the call from among the Gentiles of a people for God. This is done by the ministry of the apostle of the circumcision; and most fitly so. For he had received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and was also the representative of Jerusalem, who is however faithless, and as such divorced for a while. But Peter's title to this, as representing Jerusalem, being thus allowed, we find a church of Gentiles gathered at Antioch by other hands, and Barnabas and Saul, rather than Peter, called to the help and comfort of it.

12. — And now the Lord had only publicly to dismiss Jerusalem for a season. But as He had before pledged Israel's future conversion, so does He, as I judge, now pledge to them their future restoration. To me, I confess, this chapter has great beauty and meaning, presenting both the sorrows and the deliverance of the remnant in the latter day, and the full ruinous overthrow of their enemies. James is slain with the sword, as here-after at Jerusalem the complaint will be this, "their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem" (Psa 79:1-13; Psa 2:1-12; Psa 3:1-8). Peter, also, the hope of the circumcision, is cast into prison, the enemy thus all but prevailing against the Israel of God. But he was to go no farther, for Peter is to appear to be the Lord's prisoner, rather than Herod's. He sleeps between his keepers. He lies there "a prisoner of hope." The enemy is strong and mighty, and the remnant have no relief but in God. But that is enough. They make prayer without ceasing for him, till at length this prisoner of the Lord is sent forth out of the pit, as Israel will be in the latter day (Zec 9:11-12). At first he was like one that dreamt, thinking that he saw a vision; and so were his company, saying, "It is his angel," But so will Israel be hereafter. They will sing, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream." But in the sudden joy of their heart, they will have to add, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing"; as Peter, coming to himself, now says, "Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews."

All this is to me sweetly and strikingly significant. But the sign does not end here. In royal apparel, Herod sits upon his throne, having thought it well to be highly displeased, as though vengeance belonged to him. He makes an oration to the people, and they give a shout for him, saying, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." Thus he takes to himself the glory which was God's, and immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, "and he was eaten with worms, and gave up the ghost." So will "the lawless one" magnify himself above all, and sit upon the mount of the congregation on the sides of the north, saying, "I will be like the Most High." He will do "according to his will!" but "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (Dan 11:36; Dan 11:45). "So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

Thus is final mercy pledged to Israel. Under these signs of their conversion and restoration, and of the overthrow of their enemies, they are now left prisoners of hope. The Lord Himself gives them a sign, and then hides His face from them; goes His way for awhile, and leaves His sanctuary. All this prepares us for a ministry beyond the bounds of Israel; and accordingly, in the opening of the next chapter, we find the word sent forth to the Gentiles, Jerusalem as the source of grace and ministry forgotten, and the name of Jew and Gentile left without distinction.\*

{\*In token of this, our apostle's Jewish name, "Saul," is made to take the Gentile form, "Paul." This was of the Holy Ghost, who would have it further known even by this, small as it may appear, that the distinction of Jew and Gentile was to be lost during that dispensation, the testimony to which was now going forth. Just as before, at Antioch (see Acts 11:26), when the church became Gentile or mixed, having been drawn out from its strict Jewish character, the disciples for the first time were called "Christians." The Holy Ghost by this making it known, that a body was now preparing for Christ, which was to be anointed in, with, and through Him.}

Such I judge to be the course and meaning of the events that occurred, during the ministry of the circumcision, under the hand of Peter, as we have them recorded in these chapters. But what, I ask, was the nature of the ministry itself? What were the hopes that it spoke of to Israel? And what was the call that it made upon Israel? We shall find, in answer to these inquiries, that the apostles spoke of the proper national hopes of Israel, calling on them to repent in order that they might attain them, and be blest on the earth. They declare Israel's sin in crucifying the Prince of Life; God's acceptance of this crucified One; and, upon repentance, the remission of Israel's sins, and the fulfilling of Israel's hopes.

Thus, in Peter's sermon in the second chapter, his testimony to Israel was this that the resurrection secured the promises made to David's throne; that the ascension was the source of the given Spirit; that Jesus was to abide in the ascended place till His enemies were made His footstool; and upon all this he calls on Israel to repent. But he says nothing about the church ascending after her Head, and her consequent heavenly glory. So in the third chapter (after he and John had recognised God's house in Jerusalem), in his preaching he calls on Israel to repent in order that the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, when Jesus should return to them, and all things promised by Moses and the prophets be accomplished. But all this, in like manner, was a testimony to the hopes of Israel and the earth, and not a testimony to the heavenly glory. It was a publication of the acts and promises of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to the children of the prophets and the children of the covenant. And so in the fifth chapter

we have this — "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" — words very strongly marking the value which the Spirit in Peter gave to the resurrection of the Lord in its application here to Israel as God's nation. And as the proper fruit of this preaching and of these hopes, we find the conduct and practice of the saints to have been this — they present beautiful order and grace in the way of settling their earthly possession — they get favour with all the people, as Jesus had in His infancy at Nazareth they continue daily in the temple, as though they knew not how soon the Lord might return to it — and they heal all disease among the people, as the Lord had done when He walked through the cities and villages of Judea. But beyond all this, perfect as it was in its season, there was something still. The church had still to take with Jesus her earth-rejected and earth-rejecting character. Citizenship in heaven, death as to the world, and life hidden with Christ in God; a looking forth towards the things within the veil after the glorious Fore-runner, were great and new things still to be brought out of the treasury. Neither Peter's testimony, nor the church's conduct, were such as exhibited them. The glory within the veil first looks through, when Stephen's face shines as the face of an angel. And this was beautiful in its season also; for Stephen was soon to be made the first witness of the heavenly calling. Martyrdom was the needed ground of the full manifestation of this calling. The apostles might have suffered shame, and stripes, and imprisonment; but there was still space for repentance to Israel, as there had been during the Lord's ministry (though He in like manner suffered shame and rejection) till his last visit to Jerusalem. The cross, however, had closed the earthly things upon the Lord: and so did the martyrdom of Stephen close them now upon the church; and awful separation for a while was made between all who are the Lord's and the present evil world.

Thus till this death of a saint after the resurrection, the time had not come for the bringing out of this thing (the heavenly calling of the church) from the treasury of the divine counsels. Types, and the other intimations of it had been from the beginning. Our Lord had given the vision of it on the holy mount, but it was dimness in the eyes even of the apostles. He hinted at "the heavenly things which the Son of man alone could speak of (John 3:1-36), but they were not perceived. "The little while" of His abiding with the Father, was as strange to the disciples as to the Jews. His ministry of these things was to them proverbs (John 16:25). And so even the ascension of the Lord was not of itself adequate ground for the manifesting of that glory. For it was needed to Christ's forming the Jewish believers for godly citizenship on the earth, the Holy Ghost being received through the ascension, "for the rebellious," that is, for Israel, "that the Lord might dwell among them" — dwell among them here. But on the martyrdom of a believer in the Lord thus risen and ascended, the time had fully come for the manifesting of the heavenly calling, for the showing out of this mystery, that Christ was to have a body which was to share with Him the glory on high into which He had himself ascended, whose citizenship was not to be in Jerusalem, but in heaven.

"In the regeneration," as the Lord speaks, that is, in the coming kingdom of the Son of man, there will be saints that will find their proper place on earth, the Israel of God. Then the twelve apostles will be manifested in connection with the twelve tribes, and the saints with the world (see Mat 19:28; 1Co 6:2-3). All this will be the glory and joy of that happy time, and most beautiful and perfect in its season. The Son of man seated on His throne of glory — the apostles judging the twelve tribes — and the saints, the world. The servants will then share in the kingdom of their Lord, having authority with Him and under Him over the cities of His dominion. But this time is now

delayed, for the earth has refused it. Israel has cast the heir of the vineyard out, and killed them that were sent to them (1Th 2:16). Another testimony was therefore now to go forth, a testimony to the loss of Israel's and the earth's hopes for the present, and to the call of an elect people out of the earth for heaven. And Saul the persecutor, that is, Paul the apostle, was made the special bearer of it.

How rich was the grace displayed by the Lord in choosing Saul to be the vessel of this heavenly treasure! At this very time he was in full enmity against God and His anointed. At his feet the witnesses whose hands had been first upon Stephen, laid down their clothes. But this is the man that is to be made God's chosen vessel; and such is the way of the Lord in abounding mercy. Before this, man's fullest enmity had been met by God's fullest love; for the cross was at the same moment the witness of both, as the person of Saul is now. The soldier's spear, as one has observed, drew forth the blood and water — sin has drawn forth grace. And now, as we may say, Saul's journey to Damascus was the spear making its way a second time into the side of Christ; for he was now going with commission and slaughter against the flock of God. But it was on this journey that the light from heaven arrested him. The blood of Jesus thus again met the soldier's cruel spear, and in Saul is shown forth all long-suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe. The sovereign grace that saves the church was thus displayed in Saul. But the heavenly glory that is reserved for the church, was also displayed to him, for he sees Jesus in it. And by these things his future ministry is formed.

1909 216 And here I may observe in connection with this, that at the times of calling out new ministries, there have commonly been characteristic exhibitions of Christ. Thus, when Moses was called forth at Horeb, he saw a burning (but yet unconsumed) bush, out of the midst of which Jehovah spake to him. And the ministry which he then received was, according to this vision, to go and deliver Israel from the affliction of Egypt, in the midst of which God had been with them, preserving them in spite of it all. When he and the people afterwards stood under Sinai, the mountain was altogether in a smoke, so that even Moses himself exceedingly feared and quaked. But all this was so, because there was about to proceed from it that law which poor fallen man can never answer, and which therefore is but the ministry of death and condemnation to him, though he be such an one as Moses himself. When Moses afterwards drew towards God, standing between Him and the people, he receives (in accordance with the mediate place which he thus occupied) his commission to deliver, as the national mediator, the laws and ordinances of the king. But when in the last place, he goes up to the top of the hill, far beyond both the region of horrible fire and the mediate place which he occupied as the mediator of the nation, and where all was calm and the presence of Jehovah around him, he receives the tokens of grace, the types of Christ the Saviour and Priest, and is from thence made to minister to Israel "the shadows of good things to come." In all these we see much that was expressive of the ministry about to be appointed. So afterwards, though in a more limited way. When Joshua was about to receive a commission to compass Jericho with men of war, Jehovah appears to him as a man of war with a sword drawn in his hand. When Isaiah was called to go forth as the prophet of judgment against Israel, Jehovah was seen in His temple in such terrible majesty, that the very posts of the door moved at His voice, and the house was filled with smoke (Isa 6:1-13). When our Lord stood in the land of Israel, the minister of the circumcision, according to this place and character He appoints twelve to go forth to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But after the resurrection, when He stood on the earth in a

larger character, all power in heaven and earth being then His, He commissions his apostles accordingly — "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And so now — ascended into heaven, and having there become Head of the church, He appears to Saul from that glory; and in him appoints a ministry formed upon the principle of this manifestation. Heaven was the birthplace of Paul's apostleship; and according to this he was sent forth to gather out and raise up a people from earth to heaven.

Thus, from the place from whence his call into office came, we at the beginning might be prepared for something new and heavenly. But his apostleship was out of due time, as well as out of due place (1Co 15:8). It not only did not come from Jerusalem, but it arose after the apostleship there had been perfected. Judas's forfeited bishopric had been filled up by Matthias, and thus the body of twelve, as ordered by the Lord at the beginning, was again complete; and Paul's apostleship is thus, we might say, a thing "horn out of due time." But though in this respect, "out of due time," yet not so in every respect. The times and seasons which the Lord has taken for the unfolding of His counsels are, doubtless; all due and rightly ordered; and having "the mind of Christ" — the present inheritance, through grace, of every spiritual man — we may seek to know this; remembering first of all, whose counsels we are searching into, and how it becomes us to walk before Him with unshod feet. May He keep us, brethren, thus treading His course, and may the haste of inquirers never take us out of the place and attitude of worshippers. Let us remember that it is in His temple we must inquire (Psa 27:4). To these times and seasons, then, we may observe that our Lord marks successive stages in the divine procedure with Israel when He says, "the law and the prophets prophesied until John." Here he notices three ministries — the law, the prophets, and John. But these extended only down to our Lord's own ministry, and therefore now, in the further progress of the divine counsels, we can to these add others. The Law. — This dispensation put Israel under a covenant which exacted obedience as the condition upon which they were to continue in the land, and in the blessings which Jehovah had given them. But we know that they broke it. The Prophets. — After trespass and transgression had come in, prophets were raised up; among other services, to warn and encourage Israel to return to Him, from whom they and their fathers had revolted, that they might recover their place and blessing under the covenant. But Israel, we know, refused their words, stoning some, and killing some.

John. — The Baptist is then raised up, not as one of the prophets merely, to call Israel back to the old covenant, and to the obedience which it required, but to be the herald of a kingdom that was then at the doors, the forerunner of One who was coming with the sure blessing of His own presence. He summoned the people to be in readiness for Messiah. But John they beheaded. The Lord. — Thus introduced by John to Israel, the Lord accordingly comes forth and offers the kingdom in His own person to them, and Israel is summoned to own it and worship Him. But we know that the heir of the vineyard was cast out by the husbandmen. "His own received him not." The builders disallowed the Stone. They crucified the Prince of life; but God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. The Twelve Apostles. — They had accompanied with our Lord all the time that He had gone in and out among them, from the baptism of John to the day that He was taken up from them, and they were now called forth (being endued with the Holy Ghost) to be witnesses to Israel of the resurrection. And these witnesses tell Israel that the times of refreshing, the times of accomplishing all promised good to them, waited only for their repentance; for that Jesus was now exalted to be a Prince and Saviour to them. And

now the final trial of Israel was come. What could be done more than had now been done? Trespass against the Son of man had been forgiven, or at least, the way of escape from the judgment which it called for had now been thrown open to Israel by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the apostles; but what could provide relief, if this testimony were now despised? (See Mat 12:32). But the Holy Ghost is resisted, the testimony of the Twelve is despised by the martyrdom of Stephen, and the Lord's dealings with Israel and the earth are therefore necessarily closed for a season.

Paul. — The apostle of the Gentiles then comes forth, fraught with further treasures of divine wisdom, revealing purposes that had been till now (while God was dealing with Israel and the earth) hid in God. He comes forth with this testimony — that Christ and the church were one; that heaven was their common inheritance: and the gospel committed to him, was the gospel, as he expresses it, of "Christ in you the hope of glory. This gospel he had now to preach among the Gentiles (Gal 1:16; Col 1:28).

We are thus enabled to see the fulness of the times in which the mysteries of God have been revealed. It must be so we know, for God is God. But through His abounding towards us in all wisdom and prudence, He gives us grace to see something of this that we may adore Him, and love Him, and long for the day when we shall see Him face to face, and know as we are known. For all these His ways are beautiful in their season. Israel was the favoured earthly people, and it was due to them to try whether or not the fountain would be opened in Jerusalem, from whence to water the earth. But this debt of Israel had now been paid by the ministry of the Lord, closed in by that of the Twelve; and Stephen's address (in the 7th of Acts) is God's conviction of Israel's rejection of all the ways which His love had taken with them. They had silenced, as he there charges them, the early voice of God in Joseph — they had refused Moses the deliverer — they had persecuted the prophets — slain John and others, who had showed before of the coming of the Just One — been the betrayers and murderers of that Just One Himself — and finally, were then in his person resisting, to the end resisting, as they had ever done, the Holy Ghost. The Lord therefore had only to forsake His sanctuary, and with it the earth, and the martyr sees the Lord in heaven under such a form as gives clear notice that the saints were now to have their citizenship in heaven, and their home in the glory there, and not on the earth. This martyrdom of Stephen was thus a crisis or time of judgment, the final one with Israel; and a new witness to God is therefore called out. There had been already such times in the history of Israel. Shiloh had been the scene of the first crisis. The ark that was there was taken into the enemy's land — the priest and his sons died ingloriously; Ichabod was the character of the system then, and Samuel was called out as Jehovah's new witness — the help of Israel, the raiser of the stone Ebenezer. Jerusalem was afterwards the scene of another crisis. The house of David had filled up its sin; the king and the people with all their treasures were taken down to Babylon, and the city laid in heaps; and Jesus (for the interval as to this purpose need not be estimated) is called forth, God's new witness — the sure mercy and hope of Israel. But He was refused, and in judgment turned His back upon Jerusalem, saying, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." That was a season of judgment also — judgment of Israel for the rejection of the Son of man; and another witness is then called out — the twelve apostles, who testify, as I have been observing, in the Holy Ghost, to the resurrection of the rejected Lord, and that repentance and remission of sins were provided in Him for Israel. But they also are rejected and cast out. Then comes the final crisis. Stephen is their

representative, and he convicts Israel of full resistance of the Holy Ghost and then a new and heavenly witness is called forth. Such witness is the church; and, of the church, and of the church's special calling and glory, Paul is made in an eminent sense the minister.

"It pleased God to reveal his Son in me," says he. This is the ground of the church's special dignity, and the gospel which Paul preached. It was not the gospel of Messiah, the hope of Israel, nor the gospel of the once crucified One, now exalted "a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins"; but it was the gospel of the Son of God revealed in him. The Son had been revealed to the disciples by the Father before (Mat 16:17); but now He is revealed in Paul. He had "the Spirit of adoption." The Holy Ghost in him was the Spirit of the Son; and anointed with this oil of gladness, he had to go forth and spread the savour of it everywhere. And upon the Son thus revealed within, hangs everything that is peculiar, as I have observed, to the calling and glory of the church. Thus we read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom 8:16-17). And again, we read, "that we are predestinated to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ," that is, as Paul here speaks of himself, to have the Son revealed in us. And this being the predestinated condition of the church, there comes forth, as in the train of this, all the church's holy prerogatives — acceptance in the Beloved, with forgiveness of sins through His blood — entrance into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so as to have made known to us the mystery of the will of God — future inheritance in and with Him, in whom all things in heaven and earth are to be gathered — and the present seal and earnest of this inheritance in the Holy Ghost. This bright roll of privileges is inscribed by the apostle thus — "spiritual blessings in the heavenlies; and so they are, blessings through the Spirit flowing from and linking us with Him who is the Lord in the heavens (Eph. 4-12).

All this follows upon the Son being revealed in us, by which the church puts on Christ, so as to be one with Him in every stage of this wondrous way; dead, quickened, raised, and seated in heaven in Him (Eph 2:6). And of this mystery, Paul was especially the steward. The Lord had hinted at it in the parable of the Vine and the branches. He had spoken of it as that which the presence of the Comforter was to effect, saying, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." He spoke of it also to His disciples through Mary Magdalene after the resurrection, saying, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God"; thus telling them that they were to be one with Him in love and joy before the throne, all through this present dispensation. But this mystery did not fully come forth till Paul is sent to declare it. It is a calling of exceeding riches of grace, but nothing less could meet the mind of God towards His elect; for He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, were to be all of one (Heb 11:1-40). Thus stood the covenant of love before the world was. A mediator such as Moses, whose best service was to keep Jehovah and the people asunder (see Deu 5:5), could not answer the purpose of this marvellous love of our God; but in the Son the elect are taken into fullest favour; and while His work and merit are all their title to any thing, they have every thing by their oneness with the Mediator Himself (John 17:26). Nothing less than this could fulfil the desire of our heavenly Father's heart towards us. The partition wall, whether between God and sinners, or between Jew and Gentile, is broken down; and we sinners stand together on its ruins, triumphing over them in Christ, our heavenly Father rejoicing over them also. This is the marvellous workmanship of the love of God, and the forming and consummation of this union of Christ and the church is the

husbandry which God is now tending. He is not, as once He was, caring for a land of wheat, and oil, and pomegranates, that His people might eat without scarceness of the increase of the field (Deu 11:12); but He is the husbandman of the vine and the branches. He is training the church in union with the Son of His love, "till we all come into the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man." It is this union which makes us of the same family with the Lord Jesus, and entitles us to hear of Him as "the First-born" (Rom 8:29). It is this union which gives us the same glory with the Lord Jesus, and entitles us to look after Him as "the Fore-runner" (Heb 6:20). It is this which gives character to that life which we now have, and to that glory in which we shall be manifested, when He who is our life shall be manifested.

1909 231 Our life and glory are thus both of a new character. The life is a new life. The man in Christ is a new creature; he is a dead and risen man. His powers and affections have acquired a new character. His intelligence is spiritual understanding, or "the mind of Christ." His love is "love in the Spirit." The power in him is "glorious power," the power of Christ's resurrection. And so he knows no man after the flesh, but all things are become new to him. It is not enough that human affections or natural tastes would sanction any thing; for, being after the Spirit, he minds the things of the Spirit. He serves in newness of spirit, and the name of the Lord Jesus is the sanction of what he does either in word or deed. He has been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and there he walks, going forth in assurance and liberty to do service from morning till evening, living by faith on Him who loved him and gave Himself for him. The glory is also a new glory. It is something above all that was seen in previous ages. Excellent things have been spoken of Adam and of Israel; but not equal to what is told us of the church. Christ is to present the church to Himself, as God presented Eve to Adam, to be the companion of his dominion and glory. The saints are to be conformed to the image of the Son. It is "the joy of the Lord" that is prepared for the saints, a share with Christ in the authority of the kingdom, in that which He has received from the Father. They are not so much brought into the glory as made glorious themselves; as we read, "The glory that shall be revealed in us; and again, "glorified together," that is, "together with Christ"; "fashioned like unto his glorious body." The place of the Son is the scene of their glory. They are not to stand on the footstool, but to sit on the throne. Israel may have the blessings of the earth, but the church is to know the upper or heavenly glory. And it is life and glory that makes us what we are. The life makes us children, the glory makes us heirs, and our sonship and inheritance are every thing. And it was the gospel of this life and glory that Paul was specially called out to minister. Peter and the others forwarded it we know; but Paul was the distinguished steward of it. And Peter and the others did not forward this gospel as being the twelve at Jerusalem. As the twelve, they had borne their testimony to Israel, and been rejected like their Lord, and now had become witnesses to the heavenly calling of the church. The vision which instructed Peter in the fact that God had sanctified the Gentiles, might also have told him that God had made heaven, and not earth, the place of their calling, and the scene of their hopes. The vessel with its contents was let down from heaven, and then taken up again into heaven. This was, by a symbol, a revelation of the mystery hid from ages. It denoted that the church had been of old written in heaven and hid there with God, but now for a little season was manifested here, and in the end was to be hid in heaven again, having her glory and inheritance there. This was signified by the descending and ascending sheet, and such, I judge, is the character of the mystery hid from ages and generations. And according to this, Peter, under the Holy Ghost, speaks to the saints of their inheritance "reserved in heaven"; and exhorts them to wait with girded loins, as strangers and

pilgrims on the earth. He presents the church as having consciously come to the end of all things here, and looking, like Israel in the night of the passover, towards Canaan, having done with this Egypt-world.\*

{\*In Peter, we have many allusions to Jewish circumstances. And the Spirit in him who was the apostle of the circumcision, would naturally have suggested this. But I will refer to only one instance of this. See 1Pe 2:9-10. The latter verse has Hos 2:23, in mind. But the different connection in which the truth there stated stands in the mind of the prophet, and in the mind of the apostle, is very striking.

Israel is to be made the people of God in the latter day, as the prophet teaches us; but he further teaches us, that when that takes place, Israel shall be sown unto God in the earth, that is. God will bless Israel with earthly blessing. But the Gentiles have now been made the people of God, as the apostle teaches us; but he further teaches us, that there is no such blessing as this for them; but that, on the contrary, they should reckon themselves as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. How strikingly does the Spirit thus, in these two witnesses, contrast the call and blessing of Israel with the call and blessing of the church, showing us that the church has no place on the earth, but that being a stranger there, she is to look for a heavenly country, a citizenship in heaven; but that as soon as Israel is again acknowledged of the Lord. the Lord will hear the heavens, and the heavens the earth, and the earth the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they Jezreel (Hos 2:23, 1Pe 2:10).} But Paul was apprehended in a special manner for this ministry. A dispensation of the gospel was committed to him, and woe to him if he did not preach it (1Co 9:16-17). Though, as he speaks, it were even against his will, yet he must preach it. The Son was revealed in him for this very purpose, that he might preach Him among the heathen (Gal 1:16). For when the Lord converted his soul, He sent him out with this gospel, "Rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

I do indeed judge that it is very profitable to the saints that they discern rightly, that Paul's ministry was thus one stage in the divine process of telling out the purposes of God. That he holds a distinguished place in the church, the feeling of every saint will at once and without effort bear witness; for there is no name more kept in the recollections of the saints than that of our apostle, save the name of Him who in the hearts of His people has no fellow. And his office being thus from heaven, he refuses to confer with flesh and blood refuses to go up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him. He was not to get himself sanctioned there or by them. Before this, the twelve at Jerusalem had all authority. But the apostles at Jerusalem are nothing to Paul or his ministry. They had not cast the lot over him, nor are they now to send him forth; but it is the Holy Ghost who says, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And having thus received grace and apostleship from the Lord in the glory, and being now sent forth by the Holy Ghost, in full consistency with all this, he and Barnabas receive recommendation to the grace of God, from the hands of some unnamed brethren at Antioch. All this was a grievous breach upon that order that was to establish the earth in righteousness, beginning at Jerusalem. And not only was Paul's apostleship and mission thus independent of Jerusalem, and of the twelve; but the gospel which he preached (the nature of which we have before considered), he did not learn either there or from them. He received it not from man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He goes up, most truly, from Antioch, with Barnabas, to Jerusalem, to confer with the

apostles about circumcision; but before he does so, he withstood some, though they had come from James, and rebuked Peter before them all. And these things were ordered in the provident wisdom of the Spirit; just as our Lord's rebukes of His mother; the Spirit of God foreseeing the boasts in the flesh which would arise from both these sources, from Mary and from Peter; and thus has given the wayfaring man these tokens of his heavenward path. He circulates the decree upon the question of circumcision, for present peace. But when counselling the Gentile churches afterwards on one of the subjects which this decree determines, viz., eating meats offered to idols, he does so on the ground merely of brotherly love. He never refers to this decree (1Co 8:1-13). He was taught his gospel entirely by revelation (Gal 1:12), for at his conversion it had been so promised to him (Acts 26:16). And accordingly it was from the Lord Himself that he received his knowledge of the death, burial, resurrection (1Co 15:3), and his knowledge also of the last supper and its meaning (1Co 11:23); though these things lay within the common acquaintance of those who had companied with the Lord, and he might have received them from them. But, no; he must be taught them all by revelation. The Lord appeared to him in those things of which he was to be a minister and witness. The Lord was jealous that Paul should not confer with flesh and blood should not be a debtor to any but to Himself for his gospel. For as the dispensation was to allow of no confidence in the flesh, neither was Paul's apostleship. All that might have been gain in the flesh, was to be counted loss. Conference with those who had seen and heard, eaten and drunk with Jesus, might have been gain; but all this was set aside. Paul would thankfully be refreshed in spirit by the mutual faith of himself and the humblest disciple. Nay, he would have such acknowledged; all such in whose belly the Spirit had opened the river of God for the refreshing of the saints (Rom 1:12; 1Co 16:18). But he could accept no man's person. The previous pillars of the church could not be used to support his ministry. The Jewish order was gone. Of old, Jehovah, we know, had respect to that order. It was according to the number of the children of Israel, that at the first He divided the nations (Deu 32:8). Afterwards He distributed the land of Canaan according to this number also, that is, among the twelve tribes (Jos 13:1-33 — 19). So David in his day, under the guiding of Jehovah, had respect to the same number, when he settled the ministries of the temple, and the officers of the palace at Jerusalem (1Ch 23:1-32 — 27). And in like manner, the Lord provided for the healing and teaching of Israel, appointed twelve apostles, still having respect to the Jewish order. And this order of twelve apostles was preserved, as we have seen, under the hand of Peter afterwards; for he was the guardian of the Jewish order, and pastor of the Jewish saints. But Paul's apostleship is at once an invasion upon all this. It has no respect whatever to Jewish, earthly, or fleshly order. It interferes with it. It is a writing under the hand of the Spirit of God for the revoking of that order. And this was, as was natural, a great trial to the Jewish Christians. They could not easily understand this undue apostleship, and we find that he was considerate of them under this trial. And, indeed, those who stand with him in the assertion of the sovereignty of the Spirit, and in the rejection of all fleshly authority, should with him likewise be considerate of the difficulties which many now experience from the Jewish feelings and rules of judgment, in which they have been educated. But still, Paul was an apostle, let them hear, or let them forbear. And not only was it a trial to Jewish believers, but there were found evil men moved of Satan, who made their use of this state of things. We find it to have been so at Corinth. In Galatia it was not this. In his epistle to the churches there, he does not speak of his apostleship because it had been slandered among them, but because it was the divine sanction of that gospel which he had preached, and from which they had departed. But at Corinth his apostleship had

been questioned, and by what witnesses would he have it approved? why, by his pureness, his knowledge, his armour of righteousness (2Co 6:1-18). How does he seek to be received? why, because he had corrupted no man, he had defrauded no man (2Co 7:1-16). How does he vindicate and establish his ministry? read his proofs in such words as these — "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are ye not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you, for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (1Co 9:1-27). And again, "For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (1Co 4:1-21). Does he not by all this commit the proof of his apostleship to the manifest presence of the Spirit with him? His children in the faith were the seal of his office (1Co 9:2); the epistle that ought to commend it to the acceptance of all men. The signs of an apostle had been wrought by him (2Co 12:12). And must it not have been so? What office or ministry could now be warranted without the presence and exercise of the gifts received for men? Could the purpose of the ascension be evaded or annulled? Could fleshly authority and order be allowed in despite of the revelation now given, that the ascended Head was the dispenser and Lord of all those ministries that were for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ? When the Lord ascended, on His way up, He was a conqueror in triumph, leading captivity captive. But when He reached His heavenly seat, He became a crowned priest,\* and sent down coronation gifts to His church, by the ministry of which He is either forming or strengthening the union between Himself and the members here, and their union among themselves. These ministries thus act like the joints and bands in the human body; and all other ministries the apostle sets aside as "rudiments of the world," fitted to those who are alive in the world, but most unsuited to those who are — as the church is — dead and risen with Christ (see Eph 4:16; Col 2:19-23).

1909 245 We are therefore not true to the ascension of our Head, if we do not look for His ascension-gifts in those who minister in His name. They constitute the handwriting of the Lord in the church's genealogies. The Jews were careful to put from the priesthood those whose genealogy could not be proved. They refused to register them (Ezr 2:62; Neh 7:63). And this too in a day when all was feebleness in Israel. No cloudy pillar had led them on their way home from Babylon no arm of the Lord had gloriously made a passage for them through the deserts — no rain of angels' food from heaven, nor ark of the covenant was with them. All this, and more than this, was gone. But did they plead their feebleness, and do nothing? Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah do what they can. They cannot recover every thing, but they do what they can: and among other services, they read the genealogies, and do not allow the holy things to be eaten by unproved claimants of the priesthood. And ours, dear brethren, is a day of feebleness like theirs. Much of the former strength and beauty is gone, and we cannot recover every thing. But it is not therefore to be a day of allowed evil; nor are we, in the spirit of slumber, to fold the arms, and say, "There is no hope." We should do what we could, and among other services, we can study the genealogies, when any one seeks their register and thus they run, "A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre" (1Ti 3:1-16).

Thus run the genealogies of the bishops of the flock of God; thus has the Spirit of the ascended Head of the church written in His word. The time for glorying only in the Lord, and in that authority, and in that only, which had been formed by the Holy Ghost had now fully come; and therefore the

fact that the Lord had given Paul authority in the church, was shown by witnesses to the presence of the Spirit with him. The signs of an apostle were wrought by him. His authority stood approved by this, that he could "do nothing against the truth, but for the truth"; and because the power used by him was used "to edification, and not to destruction" (2Co 13:5-10). He claims no authority, save what was thus verified by the presence of the Spirit with him, and used by him for the furtherance of the truth, and the profit of the church. For the Holy Ghost had been publicly avouched to be sovereign in the church, as the Son had been proclaimed Head to the church. The gifts of the Spirit may be among us in various measures of strength; but the Holy Ghost in us is the title of all present worship and service. Whatever worship is now to be had in "the temple of God" (1Co 3:1-23), is to be in the Spirit; for "we are the circumcision which worship by God's Spirit." And the apostle, speaking of worship, says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord (that is, no man can call Jesus, Lord, or say, Lord Jesus '), but by the Holy Ghost (1Co 12:2). So whatever service is now to be rendered in the church is with this limitation, "according to the ability which God giveth" it is by this rule, "the manifestation of the Spirit." Paul might lay hands on Timothy, and Titus might appoint elders; but the presence of the Spirit was in measure according to the authority and service. Timothy was left in Ephesus; but the charge entrusted to him there was according to the gifts bestowed upon him (1Ti 1:18; 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6). To assume any ministry beyond this measure is to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think (Rom 12:3). And as every individual saint has title through the indwelling Spirit to "prove all things" (with this condition doubtless, that he "hold fast that which is good") so the congregations of the saints (or "God's temple"), as spiritual, are to judge also (1Co 14:29); and if the resources of the flesh, the name, the human advantages, or earthly distinctions of men he gloried in and trusted, the temple is defiled. And the temple of God at Corinth was thus defiled (1Co 3:16-23). Some had rested in Paul, some in Cephas, some in Apollos. But this was carnal. This was walking as men, and not in the presence and sufficiency of the Spirit, whose temple they were. They became untrue to the Spirit who dwelt in them. And here let me say, that it is not so much right to minister which the New Testament speaks of, as obligation. If any man have the gift, he is debtor to exercise it, and to wait on his ministry. The habit of looking on ministry as a right, rather than as an obligation, has given the church its worldly aspect. The "great house" has forgotten that service on earth is glory. But our apostle did not forget it, and he never affected anything that might have its influence in the world, upon the world's principles. He was one whom the world would pass by. He laboured with his own hands, followed his trade, and made tents, just at the time when in the authority of the Spirit he shook his raiment upon the unbelieving Jews. He was among the meanest of his company (mean in the world's judgment), gathering sticks for the fire when in the power of Christ he shook the viper from his hand. Beloved! this is unlike all that which corrupted Christendom has sanctioned in her ministers as their due and suitable dignities! But Paul was in his own esteem (and would have others esteem him by that rule also) just what the Lord made him. He would not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ had not wrought by him (Rom 15:18). He measured himself only by that line which the Lord had distributed to him (2Co 10:1-18). What folly does he count all boasting in the flesh. He was compelled for a little moment thus to be a fool before the church at Corinth, but with what zeal, with what revenge, with what clearing of himself does he leave off this "folly" as he calls it (2Co 11:1-33)! Would that the same mind were in us all, the same zeal for the Lord, the same revenge upon the flesh which is fit, like the offal of a sacrifice, only for the burning outside the camp. To me, brethren, I confess, these principles are very clear

from the New Testament. The Lord knows that naturally I would rather have all continued and settled in the flesh, that we might the more securely hold on our quiet and even way. But I pray for more faith, for more living and powerful apprehension of this truth that the earth and its works are to be dissolved, and that Christ alone is to bear up its pillars. We need the faith that would root us out of that earth in which the cross of the Son of God was once planted, and in which the course of this world, continuing the same as it then was, has fixed that cross only more firmly. We want that faith that would call us to arise and depart from it, and to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. But I would now hasten to a close, having extended my paper further than I would have chosen, and take a few short notices of our apostle in his person, ministry, and conduct; for in these he will be found to illustrate many features of the dispensation, as his apostleship was the general sign of it. In his person we see much of the dispensation reflected. He could call himself the chief of sinners when he would magnify the grace of the dispensation, and show that it could reach over all the aboundings of sin. But he could also call himself blameless as touching the righteousness which is in the law, when he would make known the character of the righteousness of the dispensation, and show how it sets aside all other as loss and dung (1Ti 1:15; Php 3:8). These things are wondrous and yet perfect. Saul of Tarsus is taken up by the Spirit, in order to present in him the grace and the righteousness that are now brought to us. Strange that we should find the first place in the first rank of sinners occupied by him who as touching the law was thus blameless. But so it was. A fair, bright, and full example of the workmanship of the dispensation is given to us in him who was made the representative minister of it. The grace of God and the righteousness of God are displayed in his person. So in his person we see the "thorn in flesh." And let this particularly be what it may, it was in the judgment of the world a blot. The comeliness that the world could estimate was tarnished by this. In the Spirit he had wondrous revelations, and the secret of God was blessedly with him; but before men there was a stain upon him. But all this is in character with the dispensation. The saints exalted in Christ, before men are to be humbled. The world is not to know them. The dispensation admits of no confidence in the flesh. In it God has set the flesh aside as profitless. The right eye is gone, and the right hand is gone; things after the external appearance are not to be looked after; there is to be no measuring or comparing of things by any such rule. And according to this, Paul had a temptation in the flesh. There was put upon him something that tempted the scorn of men. As when Jacob became Israel, he halted across the plain of Peniel. The flesh was marred, when before God he got a new and honourable name. But the shrinking of his thigh was in the same love as his victory over the divine stranger. And so the thorn in Paul's flesh was in the same love as his rapture into paradise. Hezekiah in the day when he was exalted, had been left alone, that God might prove him (2Ch 32:31). But the Lord was gracious to Paul, and would not leave him alone, but put a thorn in his flesh. And if he had stood in the full intelligence of the Spirit, he would not have prayed for its removal; for he had soon to recall his prayer, and to glory rather in his infirmities. Thus there is none perfect, dear brethren, but the Master Himself. Favoured and honoured as Paul and others may have been, there is none perfect but the Lord. This is comfort to our souls. God rests well pleased in Him for ever, but in Him only. He never had a desire to recall, never a prayer to summon back from the Father's ear — "He was heard." But Paul had to learn that he had mistaken the rule of blessing and of glory; he had to learn, as every saint has, that when he was weak, then he was strong. And thus with the thorn in his flesh, but the power of Christ resting on him, he shows forth the saints in this dispensation.

1909 269 In his ministry we see something of the dispensation also. "The foolishness of God" and "the weakness of God" (that is the testimony to Christ crucified which the world judges "mean and slight") were now dispensed, and according to this was Paul's ministry. It was weak and foolish in the judgment of the Greeks of this world. He came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom. His preaching was not with enticing words, but he was among saints in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling (1Co 2:1-16). But further extended as his preaching was over the world, it set forth the comprehensiveness of the grace of God in this dispensation. In principle the sound of this grace was to go to the ends of the earth; and so St. Paul speaks of his ministry as stretching itself on the right hand and on the left, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum. He had received "apostleship for the obedience to the faith among all nations," and he felt himself debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. He spake to the Jews, and to the devout persons, to the common people as many as he met with; and then with the philosophers (Acts 17:1-34). His purpose was to compass the whole earth. And thus he speaks continually to the churches of passing from place to place, by Corinth into Macedonia, returning thence to Corinth again, and so being brought into Judaea; and again he speaks of going to Rome as he takes his journey into Spain. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and the Spirit that was in this apostle of God, therefore, thus reached the ends of the world. He was calling on men everywhere to repent, as did the dispensation. And when he could no longer go about with the gospel, being the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, "he received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:30). All this was expressive of the comprehensiveness of the grace that was calling in "had and good, that the wedding might be furnished with guests." In the Jewish times the ordinances of God were all at Jerusalem. It was there that men ought to worship. The priest abode in the temple, for the dispensation was one that refused converse with men, but in righteousness kept the flock of God folded in the land of Judaea. But now the dispensation is one of grace, going forth in the activities of love, to gather home the lost sheep that had gone astray upon the mountains; and preaching is therefore the great ordinance of God now. Preaching is the new appointment of God, something that is beyond the mere services of a secluded temple; and of this new ordinance Paul was made the most distinguished minister.

Then in his conduct, I may say that in a very general way it was made to exhibit the dispensation. In his conduct, as he says, there was "a manifestation of the truth." And this is what faith always in measure does. Faith in a living form reflects the truth dispensed. The conduct of faith, as one has observed, is always according to the principle of God's present dealing. As St. John says, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." And as St. Peter says, "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1Pe 3:9). That is, blessing being bestowed on us, blessing is required of us. And so in St. Paul's conduct we trace the great principles of God's present dealing with the church. The Son of God emptied Himself of the glory that He had before the world was; and while on earth ever refused Himself. With title to call for legions of angels, He was dumb as a sheep before His shearers; being free as the Son, He submitted to the exactions of others (Mat 17:27). So St. Paul, though free from all, made himself the servant of all, becoming all things to all men for their good (1Co 11:1; 2Co 11:29). And mark his words to the Ephesian elders, when he takes leave not only of them but of his ministry, ready to go into prison and onto death for his Master — Jesus (Acts 20:17-35). Mark what he there declares his conduct in his ministry had been, and how

he testifies of himself that "he had showed them all things" — thus telling them that he had been made to take the honoured place of reflecting the actings of God in the gospel, letting the churches see in him the blessedness of dealing in grace, which is (as we to our salvation know) the way of the Son of God in the gospel. "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." This was a holy testimony which the Spirit enabled him to bear. And in a certain sense I would say that he even surpassed the gospel; not the spirit of it (that was impossible), but the mere conditions of it. The Lord had ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel; but Paul had not used this his power in the gospel (1Co 9:12). He might have been burdensome to the disciples as an apostle of Christ, but he was desirous to impart to them — not the gospel of God only, but his own soul, because they were dear to him (1Th 2:9). But what does this reflect but the unmeasured and untiring love of God, which has visited us in the gospel? So effectually had he learnt Christ — so blessedly was he through grace enabled to exhibit the dispensation — and beside, so fully was he a pattern of that conversation to which the dispensation calls us, that he could say, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample; for our conversation is in heaven." He lives on earth as a citizen of the heavenly city, and was (as the Spirit allowed him strikingly to express it) "unto God a sweet savour of Christ."

But, however honoured he might thus have been as the apostle of the Gentiles, and in his apostleship, person, ministry and conduct, the witness of the dispensation; yet he was not sent, as he tells us, to baptise, but to preach the gospel. For there was now to be no gathering point on earth. If any such, this apostle would have been it. But no! Christ was the centre of all renewed souls, and He was in heaven. The Lord was not now setting up one visible point as he had once done at Jerusalem. The dispensation was heavenly; its source of power and its place of gathering was the upper sanctuary. It was "a citizenship in heaven" that was now enrolling, for not yet was it to be said of Zion, "This and that man was born in her." All that in every place called on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, were now recorded on high, as in the Lamb's book.

Such was our apostle; and far more might he added of the same character, but I will not further speak of them. I would now notice only one other thing, that was peculiar to him also. I mean his rapture into paradise. In this he stands also as the representative of the dispensation, inasmuch as it was as "a man in Christ" that he was favoured with this rapture. In it he knows himself only as such, and therefore this paradise is the portion of all such. I judge it assuredly to have been the place of the spirit of the saint while absent from the body, and to which the pardoned thief went on the day of his crucifixion. Paul was actually\* caught up to it for a season, but no other man has ever had the same joy. He calls it "paradise" — "the third heaven," the place of abundant visions and revelations. Whether in or out of the body he knew not, but there he was. He has not been allowed to tell us much about it, and scripture is generally silent on the nature of it. But there he was, and in this rapture of our apostle, as by the teaching of scripture, it is witnessed to us that it is better to depart and be with Christ, and that the place of the delivered spirit is a place of abundant revelation, and a paradise of visions of Christ.

{\*Ezekiel had been caught away to Jerusalem and other places, as a prophet to Israel, that he might, in the visions of God, understand and declare the divine counsels. And so St. John was taken away to various scenes, as prophet to the church, that he might testify in like manner of the

divine purposes. But these were only raptures in the Spirit — Philip had been actually and not merely in spirit caught away to Azotus from the desert of Gaza, that as an evangelist he might pursue his ministry among the habitations of men. So Paul is actually caught up into paradise, but this was not as a prophet, nor as an evangelist, nor as an apostle, but as "a man in Christ," that all "in Christ" might know their portion in that blessing and honour which awaits them after this life, and which was so great that our apostle returning to the flesh and to the earth was in danger of being exalted by it above measure.} The actual being of such a place was opened fully to the faith of the church (though it might have been apprehended before) when He, who is now its Head, said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." And again was it verified to our faith when Stephen, "a man in Christ," said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But still this is not the church's perfection. The Spirit given to us of God is but the earnest of the house "eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1-21). The throne of the Son of man is the inheritance of the saints, and the glory for which the church waits. But that place of glory is not yet prepared, as the place of the spirits of them that depart in the Lord is. There may have been visions of it, as on the holy mount, but it rests still only on vision; it is the hope still long deferred. Christ waits at God's right hand for it, and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. The whole creation groaneth for it. But it still tarryes. However, beloved! the word is, wait for it — it will surely come and will not tarry.

Many whom I love much in the Lord may not judge with me in these things. And surely I know that we know now but in part, and therefore can but prophesy in part. But we may be helpers of each other's joy, and so has the Lord appointed it. Nevertheless, let us take heed, brethren, that we be not taught the fear of God by the commandment of men. Let us take heed of obedience in the flesh; but watch that we do what we do in the power of communion with the Lord. And in whatever of enlarged knowledge we are instructed through others, let us have grace to try it all by a conscience exercised before our God, and enquire after truth as in His presence. Be it so with Thy saints, blessed Lord, more and more! Amen. J. L. Harris.

## S. The Fan and the Sieve.

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The Fan and the Sieve.

1886 150 What a separating process is needed in order to prepare "the bread which strengtheneth man's heart! Great indeed is the toil of preparing the ground before the husbandman can "cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place." But when the harvest has rewarded his toil, then, first, there is the threshing, to separate the grain from the ear — a laborious process, whether by cattle dragging over it, "the threshing instrument having teeth;" or by the flail, so dexterously wielded by the husbandman; or by the more scientific machine of modern days. After the grain is thus sifted from the ear, it needs another process to separate the wheat from the chaff, and this is effected by winnowing. In winnowing, there are two instruments specially used, the fan and the sieve. By the first, the chaff is separated from the grain; by the second, the stunted grain and any other refuse are separated from "the fat kidneys of the wheat." Thus we get a good sample of grain, even as in the happier day in reserve for Israel. "Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth; and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures; the oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and the fan."

If we follow on farther, we shall find more labour needed: "bread corn is bruised" — it must be ground; a weary toil it was, especially for females. "Take the millstones and grind meal." Neither can we stop here: if we would separate the bran from the flour, a fine sieve is needed, and the process of bolting at length brings out "the fine flour" with which God so abundantly fed Israel, and Israel gave to her idols (Eze 16:19), and which is marked also as a special part of the merchandise of Babylon (Rev 18:13).

There is a beautiful passage in Isa 28:1-29, which shows that God Himself, as the husbandman, has constantly been carrying on a process analogous to the above, in "his husbandry" or "tillage." (1Co 3:9). Awful indeed is the judgment of God, pronounced by the prophet against Ephraim for their exceeding pride and presumption. Yet, in the midst of this denunciation, so as to interrupt and break its course, mercy rejoices against judgment, and the Lord's own sure foundation is announced as the only one which would stand, when "the hail would sweep away every refuge of lies." God would "do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act." "Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong." For while Israel or men may mock at the thought of the judgment of God; yea, they may fortify themselves, as they suppose against them; they may sneer also at the idea of the grace of God, and despise the foundation; "mockers," "scorners," "scoffers," marking alike the last days of Israel and Christendom — yet God has not all this while been acting without counsel and design; He may deal with man, Israel, or the great professing Christian body, in a variety of ways during His long-suffering, yet the appointed evil will come. It was fixed and settled, as to Israel, in the prophetic announcement: "I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth."

"Give ye ear, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin: but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

Surely we may say: "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge" — even all the preparatory means in agriculture, unto a definite end — does He not know how to manage man? how to make man understand that He is God alone, and man himself but the creature of His hands? But the analogy will be found very striking if we regard the many processes of separation, whether by judgment or by mercy; or rather by the combination of mercy and judgment. "I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." (Psa 101:1-8 :) Ever since sin came into the world, separation has been God's principle of blessing. When God has separated to blessing, there have been two principles set in operation — separation from the corrupt mass obnoxious to the judgment of God, and separation unto God Himself. The character of this separation determines the character of the holiness of those separated. Thus it pleased God to separate a people (the people of Israel) from other people, to be His own peculiar people; and there was a sanctity connected with this, marking them both as separated from other people, and as separated unto God as a worshipping people. "Ye shall not walk in the manners of the nations, which I cast out before you; for they committed all these things, and therefore I abhorred them. But I have said unto you, Ye shall inherit their land, and I will give it unto you to possess it, a land that floweth with milk and honey: I am the Lord your God, which have separated you from other people. Ye shall therefore put difference between clean beasts and unclean, and between unclean fowl and clean; and ye shall not make your souls abominable by beasts or by fowl, or by any manner of living thing that creepeth on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine." (Lev 20:23-26.) The principle of separation did not stop here: it was followed by a separation of a class and also of a tribe. "And take unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel that he may minister unto me in the priest's office." "Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine." (Num 8:1-26 :) The "God of Israel had separated the Levites from the congregation of Israel, to bring them near to himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them." But the priests were separated unto greater nearness: the very censers of the Levites, who presumed to burn incense before the Lord, were made "broad plates for a covering of the altar, to be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger which is not of the seed of Aaron shall come near to offer incense before the Lord." Even in the priestly family there was further separation; the high priest was brought into greater nearness to God than his brethren, the father and the sons. (Heb 9:6-7.) In all this process, we are instructed in a deep principle, which is the root of holiness of every kind: it is God who separates, or sanctifieth unto Himself, whatever may be the order of separation. That order once

was "only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed until the time of reformation." But it was ineffectual in keeping Israel "as holiness unto the Lord, the first-fruits of his increase." Israel speedily adopted the gods of the nations, which yet were no gods, and by mingling this false worship with the worship of Jehovah, effectually destroyed their separateness as a people unto Jehovah; and not only so, but at the same time they presumed on their separateness in a spirit of self-complacency, and thus brought out that worse form of evil, which ended in saying, Stand by, I am holier than thou; and in rejecting God Himself in order to maintain their own character.

During the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth, the question of the day was about purification. It was mooted between the disciples of John and a Jew. The Jews wanted their ceremonial purification, so as to esteem one of another nation "common or unclean." It was a higher crime in their esteem to come into contact with a Gentile than to meditate murder. "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early, and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover." They please not God, and are contrary to all men. Such was the result of separating themselves, instead of being separated unto God. The ministry of John the Baptist was a direct inroad on the ceremonial purification. Born as John was of the family of Aaron, he found his place of ministry not in the temple but in the wilderness. He "came in the way of righteousness:" descent from Abraham, or observance of ordinances, did not meet the requirements of his ministry. Repentance was an inward moral purification — an order immensely beyond the Jewish ceremonial order, but still immensely below that new order of purification to which the ministry of John was but the introductory. Those who really justified God in John's baptism were prepared to justify Him further in the reception of Him to whom John bare witness — even Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, and the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost.

It is the new order of purification from above to which John turns the thoughts of his disciples, when so many turned from John their master to Jesus. They appeared jealous for their Master's honour; John, on the contrary, quietly recedes from the scene, to make way for the display of the saving power of Him whose faithful witness and forerunner he was. John saw now that the time was come for superseding his order of purification, high as it was, compared with that of the Jews, by the introduction of this new and heavenly order by Jesus. (John 3:27-36.) God — who had secretly separated to Himself under every dispensation by His quickening power giving faith — now manifestly separated to Himself, by presenting Jesus as the object of faith. It is no longer separation by ordinance, or even by merely moral change; it is separation and purification by the blood of Christ, the Son of God, and the Lamb of God. We are "justified by His blood," "sanctified" by His blood, and by it, from being afar off, brought nigh to God (Eph 2:13). The blood of Christ is the power by which God Himself calls into peace with Himself. In this view we see the same principle in action of God separating unto Himself: only it is now by a reality — even the blood of the cross — of which all the previous ordinances had been but shadows; and those so separated are placed not in national or official nearness to God, but in real personal nearness to Him. It is not only nearness of position, but inseparably connected with it is the positive power of recognised nearness by the quickening and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Jesus cannot be known as the Son of God and the Lamb of God apart from His being the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost. And then a new ground of nearness of God is ascertained to the soul — it is nearness in Him, as well as by

His blood. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." It is therefore a heavenly nearness, heavenly pacification, a heavenly sanctity, — which is our portion. God calls us to be saints, or we are saints by calling. "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1886 165 It is evident that the maintenance of such nearness to God, which is the groundwork of "righteousness and true holiness" — connected necessarily, as sure nearness is, with a new order of being which can stand and delight in such nearness to God — must be attended with many difficulties. Such a calling and standing is equally threatened by a return to ordinances, the natural order of separation; or by using Christ Himself only as the conservator of the moral order, by which indeed man may be separated from his fellow, without being separated unto God. Now it is in immediate connection with His baptising with the Holy Ghost that Christ is spoken of as the Winnower. "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." When threshing is used, it appears as the simple emblem of judgment; but winnowing conveys rather the double idea both of separation unto mercy and unto judgment, and this especially in connection with the fan.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them." So also in the passage which presents to us the Lord having the fan in His hand — the chaff is burnt up with unquenchable fire; and the wheat is gathered into the garner. Whilst this passage has its direct application to a future separation of the chaff on the earth — when all Gentile glory shall become as "the chaff of the summer threshing floor," and the Lord's own floor (evidently on earth in connection with Israel) shall be thoroughly purged, and the wheat gathered into the garner — yet it has its present application. "What is the chaff and the wheat, saith the Lord?" may be a question at all times suitably asked, not only in the falsehood which mimics truth, but where there may be the form of godliness apart from the power.

How many there are who very consciously know the Lord, not only as holding the fan in His hand, but that He has used it in their case for severing them from many a long-cherished feeling, from many hereditary and traditional ways, which have been blown away as chaff before the wind — when Christ Himself as a substantial reality has been manifest to the soul! Old habits and prejudices have dropped off one by one before the power of truth. Many have been astonished to find how many things they have cherished and clung to, which have no warrant whatever from scripture, and yet have been more tenaciously held than any scriptural truth. The fan of separation has been needed — and we have understood in some measure the remarkable expression of the apostle Peter: "For as much as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." But after knowing the power of the separation of the fan from much of the chaff, and being brought to realise the liberty which we have in Christ, worship in the Spirit, and service in the Spirit also — we are subjected to

the far more searching process of the sieve — a process which goes on within — entering into the inmost thoughts, and proving that God requires "truth in the inward parts."

It is thus the Psalmist expresses it: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou winnowest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways." And when the Lord applies Himself in most searching dealing with Israel at a yet future day — with Israel as His people — this is the language used: "For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." It is humbling indeed to come under the scourge of the Lord; yet "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," and that because He loves them.

Yet to be subjected to the sifting process, although still a proof of the Lord's love, is more powerful to us than the very scourge itself. It is in love and mercy notwithstanding; it is to separate us into our own proper and peculiar blessings in Christ; it is to remove every obstacle in the way of our abiding in the immediate presence of God; it is to get rid of the refuse that the clean grain may be brought forth. The Lord is no less jealous of our blessings than He is of His own honour. He will sift us by circumstances, that the joy arising from circumstances may give way for joy in the Holy Ghost. How many have regarded all the most elaborate skill of man, when used in the worship of God, as chaff, by becoming true worshippers, in spirit and in truth! But, after so great a spiritual advancement, circumstances may have their influence, and the sieve may be needed, and "singing and making melody in the heart to the Lord" may be learnt by congregations being dispersed, and by the saints themselves being driven into loneliness.

It is the sieve which so fearfully lays bear the unchanged evil of the flesh in the saints, and its readiness ever to take its part. It would be an interesting enquiry whether the Lord resorts to the process of sifting on the failure of self-judgment, or whether it is necessary even when there is honest self-judgment, to search into that which self-judgment would fail to seek. "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 discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This passage shows what discoveries may be made to the soul by the searching application of the word by the Spirit, so as to lead the soul into the practical sense of the need and value of the present priestly ministry of Christ (Heb 4:12-16). The sifting process is also connected with the priestly ministry of Christ, as we find in that memorable passage: "And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." But that which appears to be so humbling, in the sifting process, is the agency of Satan. It would seem, both from the case of Job of old, and of Peter at the close of the Lord's ministry on earth, that Satan was allowed by God to take all advantage of circumstances to get at the weak point of individual character, as well as to manifest the counsels of the heart, and to bring out those reasonings and high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God; so that every thought might be brought in captivity to the obedience of Christ. But there is something beyond this, the deep purpose of God in blessing, by Satan even being made the instrument of finding the grace of God at the bottom.

It is therefore probable that the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, not only uses the sieve when there has been failure of self-judgment, but even where it has been honest, knowing how much we are the creatures of circumstances. He may sift His saints, that they may, by the exercise of faith, get above that power of circumstances, and be occupied with realities. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?" may have been the language of pure and honest intention, though betraying entire ignorance of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart. "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria," is the simple reply of the prophet, yet how full of meaning. The sifting of Job ended in a rich blessing. "The Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?" "Doth Job fear God for naught?" is Satan's reply; and then permission is given to Satan: "Behold all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thy hand." Satan was thus allowed full power over circumstances; but still he was only the sieve in the hand of the Lord. In the dispute which arises in his lamentable condition between Job and his friends, more truthful and 1 magnificent sentiments, as to the attributes and perfections of God, are not to be found in any other part of Scripture, than we find in the lips of Job's three friends. But they do not meet the case of Job, and are rather to be regarded as fragments which show the need of God in some special manner manifesting Himself, as He has done by incarnation and in the cross, than any vivid presentation of God to the soul. The soul of man cannot be satisfied by arguments on the perfections of God, neither can the dealings of God with man be satisfactory to the soul, where man, instead of God, is affirmed to be the end of those dealings. It was in this respect that Job had spoken more rightly of God than his three friends. They had asserted that Job's conduct was the solution of the strange dealing of God with Job; he, on the contrary, had referred the solution to God Himself — that God alone could explain the reason of His own conduct. Yet Job had "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." Job had, in his own case, "contended with the Almighty;" he had "reproved God," and this he must answer. But the mouth of Job is stopped in the immediate presence of God. He is not able to argue his case there. "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer: yea twice, but I will proceed no further." Now the end of all this terrible sifting was to bring Job into the reality of the presence of God, so as to have to do with God, instead of speaking even true things concerning Him, and thus from the immediate presence of God Himself, to learn even what "the perfect and upright man" was, as a creature brought there; in other words, to learn the truth of himself, by learning the truth of God. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Surely, if the more close sifting in winnowing only bring out the perfect wheat, this close sifting of Job brought him to have to do with realities; and in his thus deepened knowledge, both of God and himself, instead of any longer arguing with his friends, he is put in the honourable place of "praying for" them, "for him (says the Lord) I will accept." There may be even a complacency arising from the favour of God, from' a conscience approving that we do fear Him, from the approbation of others, which may in effect displace God from His rightful supremacy. We must then be sifted, that God may be God, and man be man. "No flesh shall glory in His presence; he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

1886 179 In the case of Peter also Satan was allowed to take all advantage of circumstances against the disciples of the Lord; and if he prevailed to make one traitor, he almost succeeded in doing the same with another. But Satan could not prevail, with all the power of circumstances at

his disposal, against the prayer of Jesus for Peter. Surely, Jesus had power to have hindered the sifting altogether; but Peter needed, and we all too need, the sieve. A deep practical truth was to be learnt by Peter, and by Peter that he might instruct others, that no wit or wisdom of man, no honesty of purpose, no determinateness of resolution, can stand before the overwhelming power of circumstances! and that faith alone rises superior to them. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Well might it fail when with the fondest expectations so rudely shocked by the arrest of Jesus, all appeared in the hands of "the power of darkness." It seemed as though God had given up every thing. "All forsook him and fled." But when the power of darkness had so far prevailed as to lead Peter to curse and swear, and deny Jesus with an oath; when by the cock crowing this was brought to his sorrowful recollection; then, for faith not to stagger or fail is marvellous indeed. It was indeed a deep soul-trying sifting which Peter needed; but how pure and clear does the wheat come forth! What a gainer was Peter! His faith failed not. It was all that was left him. Where is Peter? "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" What is to become of his boast

"Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." Peter is left without any ground of boasting. He can make no new resolve. He is stripped of everything, and brought back to know himself as "Simon, Simon." But there was the same Lord, before Whose feet he had fallen at the outset, confessing himself a sinful man. His faith did not fail. He looked to Him still, and he knew the power of restoring grace. How well was he able to strengthen his brethren after this fall and recovery! It was the severe sifting he had gone through which gives such emphasis to his words, "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." He could very feelingly say, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, stedfast in the faith."

Satan had indeed, by the power of circumstances, brought out from Peter that which Peter little suspected to be in himself, and doubtless thought thus to ruin Peter and to dishonour the Lord. But Satan was but the sieve in the hand of the Lord: that which was defective was sifted away; and Peter comes forth from the painful process converted from self-confidence to confidence in the Lord, strong by knowing his own weakness, and by proving faith in Jesus to be a blessed reality indeed.

There is one result connected with the sifting of Peter most blessedly brought out. The Lord knew what was at the bottom of the heart of Peter, for his grace had put it there. In a temperament naturally sanguine, under a mass of fleshly confidence and forward zeal, there was genuine love to the Lord Jesus Christ. After his terrible sifting, how readily can Peter answer to the challenge of his Lord, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Simon no longer voluntarily undertakes to be put to the test. He has no such thought now in his heart as, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" but he appeals to that very omniscience which had searched and sifted him. He knew that Jesus "searched the reins and hearts." On all former occasions Peter had acted on his own presumed knowledge of himself; now he appeals to the Lord's own perfect knowledge of himself. In this sifting, even though Satan was the instrument, "no grain fell to the ground;" but the precious grain, buried under such rubbish, was brought forth clean and unmixed. And is not this dealing with us according to the divine order in Psa 139:1-24 :? "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me: thou winnowest my path." And what is the reply of the soul to all the sifting through

which it has consciously passed? "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts." If such be the result, well may we, having the like spirit of faith, say, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!" Brethren, beloved of God, are we conscious of the painfulness, the shame, the perplexity, arising from actual sifting? Let this precious thought comfort our hearts, that the Lord is thus sifting away much that we have cherished more than Himself, but only to bring out that which He knows to be at the bottom of our hearts; for He by His Spirit has put it there, faith in Him, and love to Him. Let each one then bare His heart to Him that makes Himself known in the churches, as "searching the reins and the heart," and say, "Search me, O Lord."

Granted that we have broken down under the very weight of the blessings conferred by the goodness of God on us. Granted that we have exhibited much weakness and folly. Spots have been discovered to mar the good report of a long career of usefulness in the church. Double-mindedness between Christ and the world, between faith and human resources, between the truth of God and human wisdom, has been made sorrowfully manifest. Humbling indeed is the process; yet we can justify the Lord in using it.

"He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his words." Much of the evil which has been concealed even from ourselves is now being made manifest; that which was rankling underneath is now on the surface. Enough indeed has been already done to make us feel that "to us belongeth shame and confusion of face;" but if faith fail not in answer to the intercession of Jesus, then will Jesus Himself be learnt in a way He was never known before. The soul will be led consciously to have to do with Him: nearness to Him and intimacy with Him will take the place of things valuable in themselves, but hurtful in proportion to their value when used by the folly of our hearts to hinder Jesus from having the supreme place in our hearts. Much may indeed have passed through the sieve; the comfort derived from enlarged Christian intercourse, the honest desire for testimony against evil, the use of an enlarged platform of truth: but the "one grain" has not fallen to the ground — faith in Christ and love to Christ — this comes forth more simple and more unmixed than ever. The sieve has been needed to strengthen some of us, even as Peter was strengthened. To one choice servant Satan was used as a buffeter, lest he should be exalted by the abundance of the revelations vouchsafed to him. But in the case of Peter, Satan was used as a sieve, to show the impossibility of the flesh using aright the wondrous revelation made to him of the glory of Jesus, the Son of the living God — the unassailable foundation of the church. We need to be strengthened by experimentally learning the security of this Rock under us, when every confidence in which the flesh could possibly take part has utterly failed. The Lord alone can bear the glory. He abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Let Him be alone exalted. "No flesh shall glory in His presence." "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." J. L. Harris.

## S. The Golden Calf.

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The Golden Calf.

Exo 32:1-35.

1888 113 However much controversy may be needed for the preservation of the faith once delivered to the saints, it is at best a sorrowful necessity; it not only endangers the spirit of those engaged in it, often clothing self-glorying under the garb of zeal for the Lord, but it extends its influence beyond the immediate actors. The age itself may assume a controversial character, so that everything is viewed through controversial medium. At the era of our Lord's ministry, the age was characteristically religious; but at the same time so controversial, that one so ignorant as the woman of Samaria had caught the spirit; and the effect on her was to hinder any exercise of conscience before God. The present age presents too just a parallel to the one mentioned. It is also characteristically a religions age, and at the same time so systematically sectarian, that the truth of God is only viewed through controversy; and it thus fails of reaching the conscience, and hinders very effectually the ascertainment of the state of souls, individually, before God. There is a remarkable impatience of resolving things into their principles, so that some of the most important truths fail to affect the conscience, because that which embodies them is supposed to be attacked; and in this manner a deal of the most searching truth is deprived of its point. It is even difficult to apply principles to the consciences of Christians so as to avoid the appearance of controversy; for time has sanctioned so much evil which is not suspected to be evil, that principles have never been tested. Now if, as individual Christians, we know that the principle of every manifested evil is to be found in our own hearts, so as to induce the need of self-judgment and constant watchfulness (for grace alone maketh us to differ), so is it equally true that all the corporately manifested evil in Christendom has arisen from some wrong desire working unsuspectedly in the hearts of real Christians; so that there is quite as great need to watch against the working of those principles among Christians corporately, which eventually lead to the worst form of evil, as for an individual christian to watch against the principle of hatred, which, if cherished, might lead to actual murder. The principle embodied in the golden calf is one which most readily insinuates itself among real Christians. It may indeed be recognised when it has received a gross and tangible form; but spiritual wisdom is able to detect the working of the principle before it becomes embodied in form. The golden calf is one of "our figures" (1Co 10:6, margin). Its history has been recorded for "our admonition." Israel, outwardly and typically redeemed, serve to show, in a great variety of ways, those who are eternally redeemed to God through the blood of the Lamb, their peculiar dangers. That which "happened" to Israel is "written for our admonition." And thus their failures become beacons to us, and at the same time "figures" of those forms of error to which, as redeemed, we are liable. It is important, therefore, to seek to ascertain the germinant principle of evil which led to the setting up of the golden calf. The people had sung the song of redemption on the banks of the Red Sea. They had murmured; but their murmurings had only been answered by the grace of God in supplying their need. They had fought with Amalek, and prevailed through the uplifted hands of Moses. After all this they receive the law by the "disposition of angels," and by

the hand of the mediator. The covenant between Jehovah and Israel is solemnly entered on and ratified by blood — the people on their part with one voice, saying, "All the words which the Lord hath said will we do." Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, go up to the mount with seventy of the elders of Israel, and were permitted to see the God of Israel on the mount, and to eat and drink; but Moses is called up into the mount of God, with this express injunction to the elders, "Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you; and behold Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them." The people had seen the glory of the Lord at a distance; "and the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel." Here we have brought before us the position of the several parties (see Exo 24:1-18 :).

Moses, hidden from the sight of the people, was still occupied with God for the people. He was at that Very time receiving instructions from Jehovah for the construction of the beautiful tabernacle, and the ordering of their needed priesthood. He was still blessedly serving them, although they did not see him. The evil commences with the people, but is consummated by means of the very leader, in whose charge they are left, during the absence of Moses. The people do not mean to disown Moses; they fully recognise him as the man who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt; but he was not then present to their sight. This was their need — some present visible prop on which they might cast themselves so as to be relieved from dependence on that which was invisible. They said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us." Their desire was urgent, and to be gratified at any cost. Without a murmur they bring their golden ornaments to Aaron. How deeply rooted is this principle in the human heart! That which men pay for, they also have title to, to use for their own ends; and if it promises relief from dependence on God, they will purchase it at any cost. That which the people demanded received its shape and form from Aaron. He received the gold "at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf." It is remarkable, how little definiteness there was in the mind, either of the people or of Aaron, as to what would be the result of their gratified desire. The people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." How soon is Moses forgotten in this new and present object! At first they only desired gods to go before them, to carry on that which Moses had begun to do, even to complete their deliverance out of Egypt, by leading them into Canaan. But now they regard these gods, and not Moses, as having brought them out of Egypt. How deeply, how solemnly instructive is this! One departure from the fear of God may lead to incalculable mischief. The feelings of Aaron are different from those of the people. "When he saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah." How subtle is sin! Aaron, on being remonstrated with by Moses, excuses himself on the plea of simply humouring the people in what he did. "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Alas! what amount of evil may not a good man occasion by acting unfaithfully in a case of emergency. Aaron was left in charge of the people, to meet any difficulty which might arise; but the leader falls in with the desire of the people, and unintentionally leads them into idolatry. He himself had no idolatrous object in that which he did, neither was idolatry the intention of the people. In vain was Aaron's proclamation, "Tomorrow is a feast to Jehovah." The calf, and not Jehovah, had the homage of their hearts (see Acts 7:41). "And they

rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." On this is grounded the solemn warning to us, "Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them" (1Co 10:7).

We must now turn to the thoughts and judgment of God Himself on this scene. And at the very outset we are instructed in a solemn and searching truth — that God does not measure things by the intention of human agents, but by His own glory. The thoughts of God are not as "our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways." Our simple and plain duty is to acknowledge Him in all our ways. There is no such thing before God as innocence of intention, when any man presumes to prescribe for himself the mode in which he thinks God can be honoured, or the work of God can be furthered. In such instances the means employed are quite as important as the end intended. God is to be honoured in the means we use, "for to obey is better than sacrifice." And it is in the acknowledgment of God, by waiting upon Him in His own appointed way, that we shall find the most searching test of our obedience to Him, and the uprightness of our heart before Him. And may it not with truth be asserted, that the deepest corruption, both in Israel and the church, can alike be traced to some individual or corporate act,\* the only fault of which was, that it was unauthorised by God? But this is a fatal fault. It is the introduction of the will and wisdom of man into the very sphere where the will and wisdom of God are pre-eminently displayed in carrying out His own work.

[\*It would be interesting to trace this from the scriptures; but here it can only be briefly glanced at. "And Gideon made an ephod thereof [i.e. of his share of the Midianitish spoil], and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." There is nothing which our hearts will not use to displace God. The brazen serpent itself was so used by Israel. And Hezekiah "broke in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made (for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it); and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel.]"

We must now transfer our thoughts from Aaron and the people, and their feast below, to Moses standing in the presence of Jehovah Himself within the cloud of glory on the top of the mount. And well would it be for us frequently to do this practically, so that we might form a godly judgment of our own ways. We should then be enabled, when inclined to rejoice in the work of our own hands, to detect the danger of secretly departing in our heart from God.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." The desire of the people, the surrender of their gold, the act of Aaron had together ended in corruption. How fearfully instructive! The people of God cannot interfere with the things of God, but they corrupt them and themselves by them. They cast aside their proper glory, and become occupied with that which debases them. That Jehovah was their God was their glory; but they would make to themselves gods. In their after-history they desired to be as the nations, and to have a king over them, when Jehovah was their King. They corrupted themselves, and lost their distinguishing glory. And when do we find corruption stealthily creeping into the early church? Is it not in "philosophical wisdom and admiration of teachers?" The glory of the church is the presence

of the Holy Ghost in the midst of her. The gospel needed not the extraneous support of wisdom or the schools — it came "in demonstration of the spirit and of power." The introduction of human wisdom, admiration of teachers, and all that was most esteemed among men, would virtually displace the Holy Ghost, so that His power, His teaching, His guidance would practically be superceded. "If any man defile [corrupt] the temple of God, him will God destroy [corrupt]." How rapidly it spread! Evil communications corrupted the manners of the church. And surely it does not require depth of learning, but subjection of mind to the scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, to trace back to this germinant corruption in the church, suppressed at the time by apostolic power, the full-blown corruption yet to be manifested, when that day of the Lord God Almighty comes, "that He should destroy those who destroy [corrupt] the earth" (Rev 11:18). Viewed in the light of heaven, and as from heaven, this introduction of human wisdom into the church was by the apostle seen to be corruption. Those who would have introduced it, thought it a help and an ornament.

1888 129 "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them." The rapid inroad of corruption into that which God has set up in purity is remarkable. The people of Israel, awe-struck by the majesty of God, had heard the solemn words, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." To this they had responded, "All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do." And yet after the lapse of a few short days, they turn aside out of the way, and make to themselves gods. Does this surprise us? Is it not rather too faithful a history of the ostensible people of God in all ages and in every dispensation? God has not been pleased to record how long man stood in innocency; but the sacred narrative proceeds, from his exercise of dominion over every living creature, and his reception of the blessed gift of a helpmeet from God, to state his grievous fall. When Noah, who had in the ark passed safe through the judgment, is set up as head of a new world, how quickly there is his fall into drunkenness recorded.\*

[\*How strange, how unlike man, that the instruments chosen of God to introduce anything from God should themselves predict its failure in man's hands! "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to he among them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them . . . Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord: and how much more after my death?" (Deut. 31: 16, 25 27.)] And has the latest intervention of God in the revelation of the gospel of His grace proved an exception to the general rule of immediate failure on the part of man? If we proceed to the period after the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven, what says the apostle of that which would be after him? "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." The mystery of iniquity had begun to work in the apostles' time, when there was spiritual discernment to detect its beginnings, and infallible authority to meet the evil. But how quickly had the disciples turned out of the way! And this is solemnly important to mark: — the worst evils which so secretly worked in their days would only become more formed, when their discernment and authority was no longer present to detect and to resist it. It is indeed a curious feature of the mind of man, that in

the things of God he prefers stopping at secondary authority when access is open to its primary source. Both Jews and Christians have alike resorted to antiquity for their pattern, when the thing needed was to judge antiquity by the light of the scripture. Jewish antiquity was the tradition of the elders — "vain conversation received by tradition" from their fathers; for which they vehemently contended, even at the expense of nullifying the scriptures. And so, among Christians, the most bitter contention has been for traditional religion, whilst "the faith once delivered to the saints" has been little regarded. Christians forget how early was the departure from the faith once delivered to the saints, and propose to themselves as a pattern of excellence some age of the church in which there must have been deterioration. Thus they virtually set aside scripture and neglect the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to unravel the intricacies of time-honoured tradition and enable them to find that path which is pleasing to God. When tested by scripture, it surprises us to find how much of that to which we have clung will not bear its uncompromising light. But how solemn is the judgment of God on the people! "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now, therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them." But if Moses was in the place of righteous judgment, he was also in the very atmosphere of grace, and there he could take the place of intercession, and prevail because his plea was the honour of the Lord Himself. This must ever be a prevailing plea, because it acknowledges the righteousness of the judgment of God. "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." Moses can neither excuse nor extenuate the sin of the people. It is not the place of intercession to do this, because every thing before God must be truthful. What comfort for us to know of Christ that "He is at the right hand of God, and that He also maketh intercession for us!" He knows the righteous judgment of God; He knows, too, the evil of our sin; but His intercession is grounded on the way in which He Himself has vindicated the righteousness of God in putting away our sin. The intercession of Moses brings out a new feature; viz. the long-suffering of God with His redeemed people — with that (i.e., Israel as now the professing church) which has the responsibility as well as the privilege of bearing His name. This was shown in the mount, and afterwards proclaimed by Jehovah Himself to Moses. God had previously shown His long-suffering in bearing with the world for a hundred and twenty years, while the ark was preparing. He had borne with the abominations of the Canaanites four hundred years, "because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full." And now, when He has redeemed to Himself a chosen people out of Egypt, this very people corrupt themselves and become the objects of His long-suffering. And is it not the same in the present time? Is not God now showing forth "the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering" towards man as man? and this only to be scorned and despised? while those who are outwardly by profession His people, and bearing His name, are quite as much the object of His long-suffering as the world? The outward professing body has not continued "in the goodness of God"; and all which awaits it is to be "cut off" — to be spued out of His mouth (Rom 11:1-36 :, Rev 3:1-22 :). But we must follow Moses down from the mount to the scene of Israel's sin. The eye of Jehovah had seen it from heaven, His dwelling place; there also Moses had heard the report of it, and interceded for the people, and not in vain. But when Moses leaves the immediate sphere of the grace of God, and becomes himself a spectator of Israel's condition, his feeling is that of indignation and not of intercession. His "anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount." How had Moses interceded when the Lord had said, "Let Me alone that My wrath may wax hot against them!" There are deep lessons to be learned here. "God, the judge of all," who must ever judge according to His own holiness, can at the same time act

according to His own grace. He cannot extenuate sin; and "indignation, and wrath, tribulation and anguish," are revealed by Him as "against every soul of man which doeth evil." God has revealed to us how He is both faithful and just in forgiving us our sin. But how different is man from God! The sin, which God had seen and pardoned at the intercession of Moses, when Moses himself sees, he cannot bear with. Here we may learn the infirmity of the creature, and something beside this — that the saint cannot bear in himself the very sin which God had pardoned; nor will the servant of God tolerate in the people of God the sin of that people. What indignation had the godly part of the Corinthian church evinced against themselves for tolerating sin among them, even after the sin itself had been punished! Indignation is dangerous, because it is so allied to human infirmity, and "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" but indignation is godly when arising, from the sense of an insult cast upon God, or the shamelessness of saints as to their condition before God. We dare not think of man, however highly honoured of God, above what is written; and we gain deep instruction from Moses in this instance, it may be, showing human infirmity, or from Moses acting as "the servant of the Lord." How constantly do we find the practical truth of that word — "when I would do good, evil is present with me." Honest zeal will often find, close by its side, self-satisfaction or self-exaltation. Real kindness of feeling may readily associate with itself disregard for the honour of Christ. What need for walking in the fear of the Lord, and of habitual exercise of soul before Him, in order that we may "judge righteous judgment!" In that which follows there is a typical action, embodying deep practical truths. Moses "took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it." Their "sin" ("and I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire," Deu 9:21) thus became inherent in them. It was the "original sin" of the dispensation, and hung over them all the time of their prophets and their kings, and during the whole period they were in the land. They never recovered from its effects. At length, after the lapse of centuries, this original sin was met by due punishment in the Babylonish captivity (Amo 5:25-27, Acts 7:41-42).

It has not pleased God ever to reverse an original sin. He allows it to take its course, and during the progress of the development of its effects, He takes occasion to unfold more and more of His purpose in Christ. This is true of the first great original sin, as we are so wonderfully taught in Rom 5:1-21, where we find the important statement that there is no such thing as the reversal of one sin without the reversal of all — no reversal of original sin without the reversal of actual transgressions as well. "And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment, was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." It is one of the many ways which human wisdom has devised to nullify redemption, to assign to the work of Christ the reversal of original sin. Thus it is said, that man is placed in a salvable state, so that as to actual salvation it must be uncertain; because salvation is again contingent on conditions to be performed by man. Men use such knowledge as they "naturally" have of Christ, not to see their increased responsibility, but to elevate their own state before God, so that when redemption is preached as a divine certainty to faith, such a testimony invades their self-complacency, and upsets all their theory. Blessed indeed to know that "by Christ all that believe are justified from all things." The position which the church of God occupies is very remarkable. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." The ages had all run their course. Under whatever favour of God man had been placed, he had never answered to his responsibility. Some fatal sin had invariably occurred at the

commencement of the age, and continued throughout its downward course; and the special failures of the typically redeemed people of God, which marked their downward course, are "written especially for our admonition." But has the church been admonished? Or, rather, neglecting admonition, has not the church followed in its course answerable to those very sins by which we are admonished in Israel's history? The apostolic testimony too plainly and painfully proves, that in their days the church had already taken the downward course. Early in the days of the apostles there was manifested what may be regarded as the original sin, or original sins, of the church, even when there was power to detect and expose evil, and to obviate also its baneful effects, by the only way opened under such circumstances — the confession of the sin, and faith in the ability of God to bless by His grace for His own name's sake.

We find this instruction blessedly set forth in Israel's history. "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not. Ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart, and turn ye not aside; for then should ye go after vain things which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain. For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people." The original sins of the church have held on their course for eighteen hundred years; and have produced as a result the present actual state of the professing christian world, in the midst of which the church of the living God is nevertheless to be found. The full results of these sins seem to be on the eve of manifestation; and when fully manifested will be met by direct judgment from God, analogously to the judgment of God on Israel's sin in the wilderness, viz. subsequent Gentile domination — a judgment still in actual force against Israel, since their sin also has been fearfully aggravated in again rejecting Jehovah, even Jehovah Jesus, that they might maintain their own traditions.

1888 145 But to return to the scene into which Moses had come from the presence of Jehovah. After making the children of Israel to drink down their own sin, Moses turns to Aaron and asks him — "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" In Aaron we find a representation of the fatal principle of expediency, or of man's attempt to manage the things of God. His excuse is, that he thought it best to humour the petulance of the people. He had no intention to make them gods. "Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." And have not the greatest corruptions in the church originated from the effort of good men to try to consecrate a popular feeling, little thinking what they were really sanctioning? For image-worship itself was just "the calf which came out" of the homage which was rendered to the memory of saints, and which good men tried to turn to good account — but which is idolatry in the sight of God. Human expediency in the things of God speedily turns to discomfort and weakness. Aaron had listened to the people's cry instead of resenting it, and by listening he had made them "naked to their shame among their enemies." And is it not always so? In every case where the will of man has worked, and worked successfully, it has produced weakness; the desire may be gratified but leanness enters into the soul. But here it is not the discomfiture of enemies; the Lord uses another rod, the most painful and humbling for those who are disciplined by it. The watch-word is, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and brother is armed against brother. The commission is, "Slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." He whose name is "Jealous" is a jealous God; and well

indeed is it for us to have a godly jealousy, especially in a day when lukewarmness as to the honour of Christ so generally prevails.

Moses has now but little heart for intercession; when on the mount he breathed the very atmosphere of grace; but now he is in the actual scene of sin, and sees it as the Lord had seen it on the mount, when Moses had interceded with Him for the people. But now nothing but the sin of the people is before Moses. "Ye have sinned a great sin:" he must needs get out of the scene of sin, in order to get into the place of intercession. Blessed instruction for us: such a High-priest became us, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens"! Ever able to estimate sin as it must be in the sight of Him Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and at the same time to throw the glory of His own person, and the value of His own work, into His own prevailing intercession. "And now I will go up unto the Lord: peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Surely Moses the servant of the Lord goes up to the mount dispirited and dismayed. He had not personally sinned the sin; but for that very reason he felt it the deeper. "And Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Oh this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me I pray thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."

There was the truthful consciousness in Moses that he could find no plea in himself or in the people to present before the Lord; his only alternative was either to find forgiveness in the Lord's own grace, or that he himself might be blotted out, so as not to witness the shame of His people. How strongly does this consciousness of worthlessness in Moses bring into relief the dignified consciousness of worth in Jesus — "I have prayed for thee!" But the Lord has His own ways: when corporate failure has come in, He can deal with individuals in the midst of it according to His own righteous judgment. "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." At the same time it is clearly announced, that the corporate sin would in due time be punished corporately; "nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." These are principles of God of deep and solemn importance.

God is pleased to commit to man's responsibility certain corporate blessings. Such blessings become speedily forfeited through the failure of man. God still bears on in protracted long-suffering, dealing with individuals according to His own grace, but at length the time comes for corporately visiting the failing body. "And the Lord plagued the people because they made the calf which Aaron made." Aaron laid the blame on the people; but it is regarded by God "as with the priest, so with the people." God knows the amount of guilt attached to the several parties, and where they may lay it the one on the other, God charges both alike.

1888 161 The principle embodied in the golden calf was early manifested in the church; and is in fact the principle of idolatry. "Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play." This admonition was given to those who were "called saints." Is it unneeded now? Are we in no danger of idolatry? We are aware of the fine-drawn distinctions of the Romanist to justify picture and image worship; and we know also that it is not the meaning which they attach to such homage, but the light in which it is regarded by God, which is the truth. Many also most confidently believe, on the authority of the word of God, that the corruption of Christendom will end in open, gross, and palpable idolatry. Neither the progress of civilization nor the emancipation of the mind of man is any safeguard against gross

and palpable idolatry. It was the wisdom of man making the Godhead the subject of speculation instead of the object of faith, which originally introduced idolatry. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations [reasonings] and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Surely man will never find his way back to God, but by the very road of his departure from God; and the veneration of ordinances and intellectual rationalism in the end may meet in palpable idolatry. The word of admonition still applies to saints, "Neither be ye idolaters;" for the principle of idolatry is some present palpable object between the soul and God, which effectually hinders dependence on God; and this is the principle embodied in the golden calf.

We find in the days of the apostles, as may be remarked, the original elements of this principle of idolatry under several modifications; and in the progress of declension these elements have received more or less tangible shape. The grossest form of the original sin of the church is found in the Galatian error — an error held up to us as a beacon, but which really has been followed as a pattern, so as to have been in great measure the formative power of the great professing body. It is assuredly a form of the principle of the golden calf, being the natural expression of the feeling of the human heart, as though God was served with man's hands as needing something. It is said of the people when they made the golden calf, "they rejoiced in the work of their own hands," the same in principle as the Galatian error. But how strongly does the apostle rebuke it! He knew of no middle way between the grace of God in Christ and idolatry. The Galatians had been turned from idolatry to the true God by faith in Christ Jesus. They were now in danger of relapsing in principle into their old idolatry by adding the law to Christ. "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods; but now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again [back, marg.] to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" In the Epistle to the Hebrews we have the same principle in another form; the virtual setting aside of the perfectness of the work of Christ on the cross, and His present perfect priestly ministry, by recurrence to Jewish ordinances of worship. It is but the golden calf in another form. "As for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." Even so now: Christ, received into the heavens, is forgotten in His ministry there; and early indeed did the church desire to have some visible and tangible helps to worship, when they took their pattern from the sin of Israel. Stern and solemn is the warning rebuke of the apostle (Heb 6:1-20 : and Heb 10:1-39 :), so that scarcely a saint has been unexercised by it; and yet how little has it been aptly applied. These warnings are manifestly against the tendency to relapse into the old form of worship, to go back to the shadow and lose the reality. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"\*

[\*I am satisfied that both these scriptures deal with the still more terrible evil of apostacy, one from the power and blessing of christianity, the other from its foundation in Christ's blood to plunge deliberately into sins. Ed.]

Judaism, christianised, is a large and extensive characteristic of the great professing body. Men have assimilated the very things which God has contrasted, and by putting together such heterogeneous materials Christ has been dishonoured; even as the true Jehovah was dishonoured by Israel setting up visible gods, which really rivalled Jehovah Himself. The principle of the golden calf was detected by the watchful eye of the apostle, working among the Colossians in a more subtle form. Such foreign helps as philosophy and asceticism were there intruded; but in reality they hindered the simplicity of the gospel, instead of helping the soul to realised union with Christ. Such helps took it away from dependence on Christ, so that those who esteemed them did not "hold the head." This form of the original sin of the church has worked its way in the downward course of the church. The fleshly mind has intruded its own conceits into the revelation of God. Under the garb of affected humility, or it may be even under the semblance of spiritual aspirations, we find the glory of Christ in His own person, as well as the glory of His work, virtually superseded. It is the exercise of the human mind on the great facts of revelation, instead of staying the soul by faith on these great facts, which especially marks this principle; and it is one which readily insinuates itself. Direct "holding the head" is the only safeguard against it. But by far the most subtle form of the idolatry of the golden calf is that which we find in the Corinthian church. It is "glorying in men" or idolatry of man; not of man as man, but of man as the minister of Christ. How nice the line between esteeming such very highly in love for their works' sake, and putting them between the soul and Christ, according to the desire of Israel to have gods to go before them, when Moses who brought them out of Egypt was lost to their sight! It is very possible to find this principle lurking where priestcraft is loudly abjured. The desire is deeply rooted in the human heart to have some tangible medium between itself and God; which, while it may be the medium of communicating the truth of God to the soul, is nevertheless used by the soul to hinder its coming into immediate contact with Christ Himself, and to keep it in measured distance from God. Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, the gracious gifts of Christ Himself to the church, the moment each severally became regarded as the minister of so many persons, were by this very means put between the soul and Christ. They were gloried in as men. This was to their own dishonour, and at the same time to the deep damage of the souls of those who thus set them up over themselves. For by thus misplacing the channel of His grace, Christ Himself as the fountain of all grace is lost sight of. "All are yours." The infinite fulness of Him in Whom dwelleth all fulness is little known; because men only regard one, instead of the many channels, by which that fulness is communicated. "All are yours" (1Co 3:1-23). And thus, virtually, it is not the truth itself which is so much regarded, as the person who testifies to it. The truth is accredited by the person, and not the person by the truth. "And," said "the Truth" Himself, "because I tell you the truth, ye believe Me not." Any dogma of an accredited teacher would have been received; but the truth was unpalatable in itself and not received because of Him Who spoke it. In what little power is the truth which we do know held, because doctrines are received on the credit of man rather than of God! The revealed order of God's dealings with His accredited people shows that, notwithstanding His longsuffering, He allows things to take their course and to work out their legitimate end; and not only is it positively stated in scripture, but it is confirmed by analogy, that the end will be idolatry. The longsuffering of God affords indeed the occasion for separating that which is essential, and cannot fail from that

which, by being entrusted to man's responsibility, has failed; but it does not hinder evil principles introduced at the outset of the church working out to their necessary result. The perversion of the gospel, as among the Galatians, is the almost accredited order. Rituals, forms of Judaism, prove that the church has fallen into the very form of error against which the apostle so solemnly warns in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Religious sentimentalism, mysticism (and asceticism in measure), the Colossian danger, have well nigh supplanted "the head;" and the glorying in men, ministers of Christ though they be, tends to eclipse the glory of Christ Himself, and to nullify the great doctrine of the present Comforter, "the Spirit of truth to guide into all truth."

"Neither be ye idolaters as were some of them." It is a standing and not a temporary warning. Let us give it a due place in our souls. There is but one safeguard, — the occupation of the soul immediately with Him "Who is the image of the invisible God." Has the person of Christ its due place in our hearts? Has He no rival there? Is there a holy craving to "know Him?" Is the thought of everlasting blessedness associated in our souls with being "ever with the Lord?" What is there lacking which we do not find in Him? Are we lost in the immensity of contemplating the Godhead? "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Do we find the need of a medium of communication between our souls and God? "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Only let us be alive to our danger — our own hearts — our own reasonings — the reasonings of others who combine with Satan himself to intercept the immediate intercourse of our souls with Christ. Even service, apparently done to Him, may distract our souls from Him. We need the exhortation "to continue in the grace of God," and "with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord." We need awakened jealousy for His honour. The duty of upholding the dignity of His person and the perfectness of His work is as incumbent on us as on the apostles. May the unction from the Holy One deeply teach us the words of the beloved disciple — "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." J. L. Harris.

## S. The School of God

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The School of God.

J. L. Harris "He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight," — Psa 144:1; 1Sa 17:1-58

There is one feature common to all those who have been trained of God for His own service; they have had to do with Him in secret before they have become prominent in the eyes of men. The contrast to this is that restlessness of the flesh which seeks to attract attention before the soul has had this needed discipline. They run without being sent; and have to learn themselves by their own painful failures. If Paul is a chosen vessel of the Lord to bear His name, his training is in the school of trial: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Thus God has His secret ways of training for His service. It was so even with His perfect Servant, His beloved Son. "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground."

Just so was it with David. In 1Sa 16:1-23 we find David in perfect obscurity — nothing thought of among his brethren, or by his father; away from the family, keeping sheep; not thought worthy to be called unto the sacrifice. Yet he was the chosen of the Lord. And he had not been alone in the wilderness. He had been under God's teaching. He had been preparing for public service in the secret school of Him who looketh not on the outward appearance, and who seeth not as man seeth. Now so it must be with us. There must be a living before the Lord, Unless our souls, are exercised before Him, He will not use us as instruments in His service. We may think He will; but it will not be so. God will always have to do in secret with that soul which He intends to serve Him in public. The excellent wisdom of our God in this may be seen in the history of many of His most eminent servants. They are found calm, wise, and enduring, when all around are perplexed and in fear. All they say and do tells us that they have been prepared for their work. Men, who have been living in secret before the Living God, can move onward unhindered through the confusion and the strife of men. They have learnt how to stand in the breach before terrified Israel; or to meet face to face Goliath of Gath. And their preparation for this has been their living in secret before Him who is so infinitely greater than all, even before the Living God !

Thus is it here with David. In the desert he has learnt the resources which faith has in God; and now he is to be the champion of God against the champion of the uncircumcised. The lion and the bear he has slain already, unseen by men; now he comes forth to triumph over Goliath, in the sight of the armies of Israel and of the Philistines.

How fearful a foe had Israel before them in Goliath! Morning and evening he defied their armies, and his defiance was unanswered; for they were dismayed and sore afraid. Saul might set the army in array; the hosts might go forth to the place of fight, and shout for the battle (1Sa 17:19-21); but, behold, there came up the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words; and all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid, (1Sa 17:23-24) This occurred just as David reached the camp. David heard the proud defiance of Goliath (1Sa 17:23), and he saw the dismay

and dishonor of Israel. Their loud shout for the battle was soon over, and all the people were in utter consternation. But David was calm and undismayed amidst all. The stripling David is the only one who feared not. He whom his brothers despised, and spoke lightly of, in the naughtiness of their hearts; he whom the Philistine disdained and cursed. Now there was nothing that any could see in David as a reason why he should put himself forward to meet the Philistine, when none else dared to do so; nothing that men, who judge by "the outward appearance," could discern as power; but quite the contrary. The flesh would see power in "the host," in numbers, and in armor, or in the mighty Goliath; but never in the stripling, just come from his "few sheep in the wilderness!"

Beloved, mark this: David had had to do with the Living God; and now he saw that the name of the Living God was implicated. Israel looked to Israel's resources; and what were the resources of Israel compared with those of the Philistines? But here was one who had the mind of God — one who looked to the resources of the Living God. It was not that there was natural courage in David more than in Saul; but there was faith in David. It is true that David had been in obscurity in the wilderness; but there he had learnt communion with God. And now he came forth as one fresh from the Living God, and viewed all around him according to God; and what he had learnt of God in secret he brought out into the circumstances before him. And this was the secret of his strength and of his victory. The circumstances were well considered, their difficulty and danger weighed; but his faith brought God into them, and acted amidst them in His wisdom, and in His power. Thus it is that David here looks on all around him. He views the army of Israel as the army of the Lord of hosts. He looks at it in the light of Him from whose presence he had just come. (1Sa 17:26) And I ask whether our failures are not invariably here, that we have not been in secret with the Living God? This is the essential and primary matter. Do we esteem communion with God our highest privilege? Do we value living with God even more than living before the saints and with the saints? I believe we prefer living before the saints to living before God and with God. We may be comforted when surrounded by the saints; but our strength is in walking in fellowship with the Living God, knowing that we are to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The flesh itself may seek its own, and find a response, too, among the saints; but the flesh withers, it is truly grass, in the presence of God. Hence it is our security, as well as our joy, to dwell by faith in "the secret place of the Most High," and to come forth into service, in strength gathered up there. Then shall we be able to look at every foe, as David here looks at Goliath; "for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the Living God? But the language of faith instantly excites the flesh. So was it with Joseph, when telling his brethren his dreams. So it is here with David and his brethren. This we see in Eliab's words: "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart." The moment the flesh sees a power greater than its own (as Eliab here sees in David), all it can do is to talk of it as pride. Now Eliab was the eldest brother, and he stands forth here in that prominence which the flesh always loves and seeks. He was a man distinguished for natural attractions; but however goodly his countenance or his stature, God had refused him" (1Sa 16:6-7) The Lord's anointed was not he whom man esteemed. And how constantly are we taught this lesson in the Word? by God's rejection of the first-born, and His choice of the younger. Eliab stands like Ishmael or Esau, as the representative of the natural title of the flesh, In the exercise of this title he thus scornfully rebukes David, But David was speaking according to a wisdom, moved by a power, of which Eliab knew nothing. David was speaking the language of faith The Living God, the Lord God of the armies of Israel, filled his eye; and by Him he measured the Philistines and their champion. Eliab had no such standard before him as this: he spoke and felt as a man:

and therefore the language of faith was to him "pride and naughtiness of heart." And the flesh always thus mistakes faith. The flesh angrily replies to us, "It is pride," as often as we speak of confidence in the Living God. That very confidence which is the deepest humility, is always condemned by the flesh as pride. For there is no depth of humility so great as self-abandonment, in order to bring in the Living God. David, in the whole of this action, loses sight of himself, seeing only God and the armies of God. It is the power and the privilege of faith to have self cast entirely out of sight, and God alone filling its vision. "No flesh shall glory in His presence;" "he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." This is what David had learnt; this David is now displaying; and this it is which Eliab calls pride. Now the truth is, that the flesh is the proud thing. I trust that we know this; and that we know also that faith is a self-emptying thing; because faith receives every thing from God; yea, beloved, more even than that; faith receives God Himself, as beyond every blessing which God can give.

"David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" Had David gloried in himself? No, indeed. And was there not a cause for his speaking as he did? If ever the name of the Living God is brought in question, there is always a cause. The very purpose for which we are left here in the world is, that we may confess the name of Jesus before men, and set aside our own name. On that the hearts of all God's saints were united in this one thing — the confession of the name of the Lord Jesus! But let us follow David as he passes from Eliab to the presence of Saul. What conscious dignity, what entire self-possession, are now seen in David. "And David said to Saul. Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." (1Sa 17:32) While the whole army of Israel trembles, one stripling stands before the King and says, "Let no man's heart fail because of him." Yes, there is in faith that self-possession which enables us, not only to feel, but also to minister comfort and confidence amidst the most trying circumstances. Faith draws from resources untouched by circumstances. And therefore, instead of being overcome of trial, is able, as the apostle says, "to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2Co 1:4) David had already gone through trial, and had already, therefore, proved the God in whom he trusted. "He knew in whom he had believed." He had been in danger before, and had been victorious; therefore is he confident now. There had been dealings between his soul and God in the wilderness; dealings, it would seem, never brought out to public light until this moment (1Sa 17:31-37) Oh, beloved! where is it that the saints learn really to get the victory? I believe, where no eye sees us save God's. The heartily denying of self, the taking up the cross in secret; the knowing the way, in the retirements of our closets, to cast down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; these are our mightiest achievements. The closet is the great battlefield of faith. Let the foe be met and conquered there, and then shall we be able to stand firm ourselves, and to comfort and build up others also, in the hour of outward conflict. He who had already slain the lion and the bear in the desert is the only one unterrified by Goliath in the valley of Elah.

How does this disclose to us the real secret of David's strength — the true strength of faith? How we can tell what the apostle Paul meant when he said, "I am a fool." He was obliged to speak of himself, that was his folly. His great strength in service — the reason why he was able to bear so much from the petulance of the saints, was because there had been exercise between Paul's soul and the Lord, which no one was a party to save himself and his God. For the like reason David can now say to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him."

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him." Saul looks at David and then at Goliath; and, speaking as a man, Saul was right. But Saul knew not the secret of God which David had learnt. Saul never knew what David was now going to tell. If Eliab had done such exploits, he would not have kept it secret for a day; but David had learned in another school — a school in which he had been taught not to make much of David, but of the Living God. David, therefore, so far as the Scriptures inform us, had never boasted of, or even mentioned, his victory; but when the occasion demands it, he can come forward and tell of the Lord's goodness unto him. So with the apostle, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven." For fourteen years no one, it seems, knew he had been up to the third heaven; but when an occasion comes to bring it out for his Master's glory — not for his own glory — then he declares it. A great deal more was going on between the Lord and Paul than any one else knew. So it was with David. Who knew what this stripling had done? Who knew that he had triumphed already so wondrously? Who knew that he had delivered the lamb of his flock out of the mouth of the lion, and that both lion and bear had fallen by his hand? Eliab knew not this. Saul knew not this. It might possibly have been known to keen discernment of individual faith (1Sa 16:18), but it had gone no further. Beloved, be assured that if you would really be strong, it must be secret living before God. I believe that the reason why we are all so weak is, that we care so little about secrecy before God. We are ready and eager to run into some service to be seen of men, but do we esteem unseen communion and discipline before God beyond all? Depend on it, if there is not the slaying of the lion and the bear in secret, there will be no killing of Goliath in public; no power or wisdom in our public service. This should lead us to understand that little word, "taking up the cross daily." People can take up the cross, they think, on some great occasion; but doing this on great occasions is nothing like taking up the cross daily, daily denying self, daily hating and losing one's life in this world. God's eye is always on us; it is our privilege to walk always before God, and thus we have hourly opportunity of taking up the cross before Him; confessing Jesus before Him, and denying self.

"David said, moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." (1Sa 17:37) David knew that one was as easy to God as the other. When we are in communion with God, we do not put difficulty by the side of difficulty; for what is difficulty to Him? Faith measures every difficulty by the power of God, and then the mountain becomes as the plain. Too often, beloved, we think that in little things less than Omnipotence will do; and then it is that we fail. Have we not seen zealous and devoted saints fail in some trifling thing? The cause is, that they have not thought of bringing God by faith into all their ways. Abraham could leave his family and his father's house, and go out at the command of God, not knowing whither he went; but the moment he meets a difficulty in his own wisdom, and gets down into Egypt, what does he do? Constantly fails in comparatively small things. Once in a wrong position, one which we have chosen, and how weak are we! Faith knows no little things. Faith discerns our own weakness so clearly, that it sees that nothing less than the power of God can enable us to overcome in anything. So that faith never makes light of danger, for it knows what we are; just as, on the other hand, faith never faints at the danger, because it knows what God is. This true estimate of our weakness and peril always gives a chastened tone to the confidence of faith. Measuring ourselves by our foes, what do we appear? "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this

world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph 6:1-24) And what are we compared with such? what our strength compared with theirs? "We were in our sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight!" "Therefore, put on the whole armor of God." Thus does faith discover the reality of our own weakness, while it rests secure in the might of the Lord. Thus faith knows what the flesh is, though the flesh knows not itself; and consequently, he who is strongest in faith will least glory in self. "When I am weak, then am I strong."

Thus it is here with David. He well knew that he was no match for Goliath. None need tell David that. David was not acting in pride of heart. Far from him was any thought of his own strength, when he saw the terrible giant of Gath. He felt himself to be less than either Eliab, or Saul, or Goliath thought him to be. Nevertheless, he could go forth in most perfect confidence. He knew that he should be delivered. Out of weakness he was made strong.

"And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." Having said this, Saul clothes David in his own armor. "He put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail." Saul could say, "The Lord be with thee but Saul knew not how to trust in the Lord as David knew. He sought to arm David as Goliath was armed; he brought forth these his own carnal weapons. But these will not suit the soldier of faith. The moment David had got Saul's armor on, he could not move at all. All was constraint; all was effort. Now, beloved, there is no effort in faith. Whenever you and I are acting beyond our faith, we are conscious of effort, we are awkward. Wherever there is simple faith in the living God, we see saints go on quietly, easily, unobtrusively, and (it seems to me) victoriously. There is a happy liberty in the service which faith renders unto God, which no skill or effort of the flesh can assume; and we must watch against mistaking effort for faith. There are many modes in which such effort is made to imitate the faith of others; for example, to make sacrifices because another has made them, is one mode. I believe that all this is truly awful. Whenever there is real strength from the Lord, persons move on easily and quietly; laying aside and relinquishing all other resources, because of what they have learnt in the cross.

"And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them." David feared not to go, the Lord being with him, as Saul had said; but he could not go with these also. Faith never trusts in part to the Lord, and in part to man. David had no helmet of brass, no coat of mail, when he slew the lion and the bear; then he went, the Lord alone being his strength. And, as he says, "The Lord delivered him." Just as Paul said, "No man stood with me" . . . but "the Lord stood with me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." In like manner had David proved the faithful arm of the Lord, but Saul's armor he had never proved. But how often have we clothed ourselves, or allowed ourselves to be clothed with such encumbrances, without detecting at once, as David did, their unfitness, and casting them from us. Have we not often worn them complacently; yea, gone forth to fight in them? Have we not often acted as though God's work needed help by this or that form of human power; as though what was begun in the Spirit could be made perfect by the flesh? and therefore we have had to learn our folly and unbelief, in our discomfiture and loss. But it was not so with David here. He instantly detects that the wrought and polished armor of Saul befits not the soldier of faith. The word of Saul was good, but that word was belied by such arming as this. And I believe that those with whom God deals much in secret will be like David here; they will quickly, intuitively, as it were, discern and reject the advances of the flesh. They will thus distinguish between the precious and the vile. There will be an acuteness of spiritual sense (Php 1:9) in such, which is acquired nowhere but in direct communion with God.

And hence, when out among the snares and wiles of the foe, if a film pass for a moment over the eye of their faith, and so a false object attract them, its falseness will be felt, even when not seen. Thus it is here with David. He stands a moment, indeed, to put on the whole armor of Saul; but just when Saul must have thought him armed for the battle, David feels himself fettered and burdened. The world's most skilful aids are faith's surest hindrances.

"And David put them off him." Thus does faith strip itself of all carnal weapons. For faith stands entirely in the power of God. Now our learning this is often the hardest part of our lesson; that which we most slowly learn, and soonest forget. But if we knew more of secret dealing with God, we should much more speedily rid ourselves of all carnal weapons. The soul which, like David, has been much exercised in secret before God, knows the utter worthlessness of every thing but God's own strength. And having thus learnt this blessed lesson, it readily casts off those things which the flesh so esteems as aids, and feels itself set free by their loss. How far more blessed this way of learning the flesh, and denying it, than any other. But for want of such direct living before God, we have to learn this in painful discipline, and after many failures; and it is the hardest part of our discipline to be stripped of those things which by habit and education we have all thought necessary; to stand aloof from modes of action in which, after the manner of Saul, the name of the Lord and human authority, or human wisdom, are combined; such combinations, often called judicious and useful, are most delusive and dangerous. How do we see the apostle rejoicing to count all those things esteemed by men loss for the sake of Christ. Why was not this a hard thing to him? How could he thus thoroughly renounce and put from him these things? He had learnt to rejoice in Christ Jesus;" to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Remember therefore, beloved, that he who has much to do with God in secret cannot use these carnal weapons. And surely this should show us the importance of coming forth from the presence of the living God into all our service; that we may be thus prepared to detect and to mortify all the pretensions and advances of the flesh. For it is sad indeed, through want of this, to see a saint trying to fight in the Lord's name, but clothed in the world's armor. Thus the world obtains a place in the church. Its principles and its powers are recognized in the very place where God has written, "Love not the world." "All that is in the world is not of the Father." "The friendship of the world is enmity with God," This is often done in controversy. Argument is met by argument, instead of the simple use of the word of the Lord; Saul's helmet of brass and coat of mail, instead of the sling and the stone, and the arm of faith, are opposed to Goliath's brass and mail. How often does the Lord vindicate His own word when used in faith, carrying it with divine power to the heart. And how often does He humble us by showing us how little our strong arguments avail, save it be to stir up heats and strife. The Lord in all this make us more simple. But David goes not forth unarmed to the fight, though he casts from him the armor of Saul. He took his staff, the five smooth stones in his shepherd's scrip, and his sling; thus armed, he drew nigh to the Philistine, (1Sa 17:40) Thus he strips himself of one sort of armor, only to array himself in another. But what simple armor is this? If David overcomes Goliath with this, surely the victory must be the Lord's. This armor was never wrought by art and man's device; the running brook had given these stones their smoothness. But faith is always thus armed. The armor of faith, therefore, is always weak and foolish in the eyes of men. God's mightiest victories have been won by instrumentality which man has most despised. The foolishness of preaching (a foolish thing in itself, and a foolish subject, Christ crucified) man treats with disdain; yet it is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Preaching has ever been

as foolish as David's sling. But what we want is much more of such simplicity remembering that we have the truth of God to address to men's consciences. We have weapons "mighty through God," if we had only simple faith to trust to them alone, rejecting the armor of human energy, wisdom, and authority.

"And the Philistine came on, and drew near unto David." (1Sa 17:41) And disdainful David and his armor, Goliath, says, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" Remember this, beloved, that the flesh always thinks itself insulted, because our weapons are not such as itself uses. The flesh likes to see sword opposed to sword, helmet against helmet; the flesh loves its own. But David said, "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." Thus David puts the question on its true basis. It is now simply a question between the Lord of hosts and the Philistine. David puts David quite out of the question, and brings God Himself in as the antagonist of Goliath.

Thus should it always be with us. What are we? What is the foe? It matters not what we are, or what is the power of the foe; it signifies not however mighty the one, or weak the other; will not God vindicate His own name? David came in the name of the Lord of hosts; and will not God be jealous of His own name? Will He allow the Philistine to triumph over that? Never! Here then is the might of faith. Faith always brings in Omnipotence. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is ever the word of faith.

Now David had never stood thus at this hour if he had not learnt God as his God in secret. Therefore could he say, "Let no man's heart fail because of him;" and therefore could he thus meet Goliath. The name of the Lord must be our strength against every evil, whether without or within. Suppose the worst kind of evil, sin by a saint (and I trust that we all know that sin in a saint is far worse than sin in another), and what is our refuge? "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great." You have only to put God in remembrance of His own name, and He will be jealous for that name. Thus faith can always use the name of the Lord as its strength against every foe. So that instead of there being pride in David's heart here, he was shrinking himself into nothing, and making God everything. His most confident words are his most humble ones. And is it not the name of Jesus that we have to set against every thing — against every trial, every anxiety, every enemy? Is it not this which God is teaching many souls in secret now? Leading them into a sense of pollution and weakness they never knew before — into trial they never knew before, in order that they may know the value of what they have in the cross? Not as though they had got everything, but to prove this in them and unite them.

Thus many are proving experimentally what redemption is, by being made to feel the necessity of such an almighty friend as God. God is thus in secret now instructing many souls in the value of the cross. And why? In order that they may be strong in the conflict. And living before God in secret will ever make us act, if I may so speak, on the aggressive. This is remarkable in David, He says (1Sa 17:46, 1Sa 17:48), "This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel." And David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. David tarried not, faltered not; but instantly used his simple arms, and smote his foe to the earth. (1Sa 17:49) "So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there

was no sword in the hand of David." (1Sa 17:50-51)

It was not, then, that David merely waited to be attacked, but he hastened, and ran to meet the Philistine. The confession of the name of the Lord proceeds most powerfully from us, when we have learnt in secret the value of that name. Then grace and wisdom are often given, even to act aggressively against evil. But surely we have learnt how much grace, how much of Christ, it really requires to stand in testimony against evil. How do we fail in this for lack of more cultivated communion with God. Mark how calmly and deliberately, though instantly, David took the stone. There was no show of effort. It was done just as though he had been in the wilderness, with no eye upon him but God's. And the Lord directed that stone, just as He had enabled him to overcome both the lion and the bear.

Thus David prevailed; and thus does faith ever prevail. I believe that at this present moment there is much opportunity for such service of faith; but power for it must be sought by secret living before God. Then, whatsoever service our hand finds to do, we shall be enabled to do it in God's strength. If a saint be greatly blessed of the Lord in public, we may be sure God has been, dealing with him in secret, in a way we had not supposed. But how often, after a Christian has been signally used in service, do we see him failing in some comparatively little matter. Such failure too often comes from forgetfulness of that injunction: "PRAY to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

## S. The Secret of God.

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The Secret of God.

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant" Psa 25:14.

Among other means by which the word of God, the only standard of truth, has been effectually hindered by man, in the office assigned to it by God, one has been the habit of generalising God's truth and presenting to the mind certain propositions, as if they contained the whole of His revealed will. Hence has arisen a great impatience of searching the scriptures. We presume very soon that we are in possession of all necessary truth which the word of God contains, because we confine all necessary truth to that which respects individual salvation; and we revere the Bible, rather because it administers to our necessities as fallen sinners, than because it reveals God and His glory. It is for this reason that we find so many real Christians in deplorable ignorance of the word; it has not been searched into as containing, in every part of its revelation, some object of faith or hope, intended to be morally influential upon their souls. They have not sought to it as those whose privilege it is to be interested in all the counsels of their heavenly Father; and they have often read it as if all the truths contained in it were necessarily to be comprehended under those which have occupied their own minds.

It is indeed very sorrowful to witness how often the most important conclusions are attempted to be supported by scripture, wrested from its context in the most violent manner, so that a threatening of judgment is sometimes produced as a promise of mercy. It is not my object to expose this, but to point out two evils which have resulted from it:

1st. the inability in most Christians, of meeting error which Satan always mingles with much truth, from their being "unskilful in the word of righteousness;"

2nd. that our present very low state in a great measure arises from the want of that definite apprehension of the glory of our calling, which the word of God presents to our view. In fact whilst, in the language of ordinary life, most words convey to the mind some distinct idea, those of scripture are held so vaguely and loosely, as often to convey no real meaning at all. It is thus that Satan has fearfully succeeded in lulling men into security, when the most express declarations of God fail of touching the conscience, even in His own people. It is thus that the great and fearful crisis is hastening on "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of truth, that they might be saved: and for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

It is by the word, through the Spirit, that we can alone become acquainted with, or established, in the truth. And as God has "magnified His word, above all His name," and called it "the sword of the Spirit" (Psa 138:2), it is in implicit subjection to that authority, that I would attempt to develop that secret which was in the mind of God from all eternity; which was first in His mind, and of which He

gave the earliest typical intimation, but which was not made known till after the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, Who leadeth into all truth. It is nothing less than "all truth" which is our portion. God is light, the brightness of His glory has been expressed to us in Jesus; there remains nothing more of revelation by the word, although nearly every thing of actual manifestation is yet to be.

Moses truly was commissioned to declare much, but yet he knew he had not declared all, there were secrets in the divine mind which himself and others of the worthies, holy men of old, "desired to see and saw not, and to hear and heard not"; but it was the prophet like unto Moses that was to be received, as he into whose mouth God would put His words, that he might speak unto them all that He should command. He alone was able to declare God (John 1:18). Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Hence the difference of the language of Moses and Paul. The former, led to look into a long vista in the fortunes of His people, lost in the contemplation of the fearful judgment coming upon them, says, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us and to our children" (Deu 29:29). But that which He had kept secret from Moses, He had revealed by His Spirit unto Paul, "for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." "I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:25-26). Moses was indeed taught that His people which had corrupted themselves, would be brought into a condition of such estrangement from God, "that He would move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, that He would provoke them to anger with a foolish nation" (Deu 32:21). The Holy Ghost, by Paul, shows the purpose of God in their temporary rejection; even that by their fall might be "the riches of the world"; by their diminishing "the riches of the Gentiles"; by their casting away "the reconciling of the world"; in other words, the introduction of that dispensation of marvellous grace under which we are. True it is that both its grace and glory are little considered by us "sinners of the Gentiles." In order to see either distinctly, we must place ourselves in the situation of the favoured people of God; we must judge through their reasonable prejudices instead of our own fearful high-mindedness and self-complacency. The introduction of "the eternal purpose of God," even the making known unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, was an event for which the minds of God's people were not prepared. It was a something entirely new as to revelation, although first of all in the mind of God: it had been figured in Eden, in the giving to Adam, for a help meet for him, the woman taken from his side whilst he slept; "this is a (or the) great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and His church." This great mystery was very gradually unfolded indeed. The personal ministry of the Lord was with very few exceptions confined to Israel, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But His ministry to them was chiefly in testimony against evil, and, all the while He was testifying unto them as the sent of God and last witness to them, He treated the nation as apostate, and frequently intimated the change in dispensation which was about to be introduced.

Among the first notices of this, we may remark the sermon on the Mount; every line of which went against a strictly Jewish feeling. I mean the feeling of one who considered himself as under the law, and therefore that law (i.e., the assertion of right) was the rule between Himself and others. Law, properly speaking, knows nothing of mercy; the assertor of it must necessarily take the place of one who has not swerved from the rule of right himself, and therefore with others who have

transgressed that rule has the title to deal in the way of retributive justice. "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority." It was His own authority as the Lawgiver, set against that which was said to them of old. And unless even now we see distinctly, how completely the genius of the present dispensation is diverse from the former, we are necessitated to charge God foolishly, and to set God speaking by Moses against God speaking by His Son; or to do that which is now so commonly done, to confound and therefore to neutralize both. The principle is "the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb 7:12). So now, the kingdom being changed from an earthly to a heavenly one, the law is of necessity changed also. Whilst God dealt with a people under a dispensation of righteousness of law, it is plain that their earthly blessing (and the law as given by Moses knew no other) depended on their obedience to it, "for he who despised it died without mercy:" this was the tenure of their blessing, "if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Whilst this was the case, God made His own principle of conduct applicable to His people. He was dealing with them ostensibly in law, and therefore He sanctioned that same principle, even law as between man and man. But when God changed His principle of dealing with man from law to grace, then was a new principle of man's conduct to man necessarily introduced also. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; and He by whom grace came could say, not as dis-annulling or falsifying what went before (for surely not one jot or tittle shall pass away, till all be fulfilled), but as introducing the great mystery of the grace of God, "It was said to them of old, but I say unto you." Our calling is not now to prospective blessing, or continuance of blessing under conditions performed. "But God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace; which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." And therefore our conduct to others must be regulated by the principle of God's conduct to us. The principle of God's own kingdom, even the kingdom of heaven, which is grace, is the only one allowed to the children of the kingdom. So that which might be right and fitting to those of old, would be wrong and sinful in a disciple of Him Who only is to be called Master. Hence we discover the reason why Christians so naturally cling to law as their principle of action, since it allows their dealing towards others on a principle which went to secure earthly blessing, whilst grace applies only to heavenly. The next notice of this in the Lord's ministry is that remarkable one in the case of the centurion — "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel; and I say unto you, Many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, etc., in the kingdom of heaven, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness." Again the surprising statement the Lord made respecting John, His own forerunner, (filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb, greater than any born of women,) that the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than he, closing with the solemn warning, "He that hath ears to ear let him hear." It was a plain intimation of the introduction of something widely different from that in which they stood. The declaration of the blessing that rested upon them (Mat 13:6) — because that unto them "it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," which was not made known to others — was a succeeding step in leading their expectations onward. A subsequent mark of approval of the faith of any Gentile (Mat 15:22-28) on an occasion which most significantly marked the transfer of that which the children despised and loathed, to others who would gladly receive it, must have raised in their minds the question, "Is He the God of the Jews only?" Is He not also of the

Gentiles?

These and many such like kinds tended to prepare their minds for that which they could not then bear, because the groundwork on which it was based — His own sufferings and death — was at that time only prophetically stated, and had not actually taken place. It was when the Gentiles came to inquire concerning Him (John 12:21) that Jesus Himself says, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified;" — and then "I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all unto Me; this He said signifying what death He should die." So long as he was personally ministering on earth, He would be only exposed to rejection. Now the Messiah on the earth was strictly and properly the Jewish expectation. But here is one very different held up to them. The Son of Man must be lifted up! but who is this Son of Man? It was the complete subversion of every fondly cherished hope on their part, as Jews, but it is the only ground of blessing to us as Gentiles. It is in the cross that God is shown as no respecter of persons. The cross is the attractive point to all, because all are brought in guilty before God, both Jew and Gentile. The introduction of this dispensation of grace is on the avowed principle of the universal ruin of the human race. Moral qualification is out of the question: — "There is no difference, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Take the highest supposed qualification, natural or moral, the principle of grace is nullified, if it is attempted to approach God otherwise than as lost: and the lowest comes in on the same plea. God, by the cross, has set aside the barrier (of His own erecting) of access to Him. "And the law is not of faith, but the man that doeth them shall live by them." "Christ hath redeemed us (Jews) from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we (Jews) might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The difficulty in the mind of the Jew, was, Did not their rejection implicate the faithfulness of God? was not the word of God made of none effect? Not in any wise; the Messiah, as concerning the flesh was theirs. He fulfilled in His person and work, all His Jewish responsibilities. "He died for that nation." He underwent the curse of the law for them, but not for that nation only, but that He also should gather together in one (even in the cross) the children of God that were scattered abroad. Here is the Gentile dispensation; but let not the Gentile deny the proper Jewish expectation, and the work of Christ for them, pre-eminently as the Redeemer of their forfeited possession, lest he invalidate the faithfulness of God which is the alone security for his own blessing. Faith "sets to its seal that God is true"; but if God fulfils not His earthly promises to the literal Israel in Messiah, then the gifts and callings of God can be repented of. In fact God's dealing with the Jew, is the great outward palpable demonstration of His sovereignty and of His election.

1889 209 The commission given to the apostles before His death is widely different from that after His resurrection. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles (nations); and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But when all the power in heaven and earth was given to Him, then the commission takes in the universal range, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." It was no longer matter of testimony to Israel only. Jesus was made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises of God unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; it was now grace to sinners. But this large commission was not then acted on. Even after His resurrection, those who were conversant with Him during His sojourn on earth, "to whom He showed Himself alive after His passion by

many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," even then their minds were only opened to a Jewish hope. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" This was their proper hope as Israelites, that all the promises of earthly glory should be made good to Israel in the resurrection of Messiah. The everlasting covenant, "even the sure mercies of David," was secured by the resurrection, as the apostle testifies; and as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, "I will give you the sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:34). He had now shown His power over death and the world; and so far as earthly glory was concerned, it might then have been asserted. In order to that there was no need for Jesus to have ascended into heaven. He could have called forth Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, from their graves, and made good the promises of God to them, in faith of which they had died. In their expectation the disciples were not wrong; but they had not yet entered into the intermediate dispensation — "the hidden mystery" of God. They had forgotten that it was expedient for them that He should go away; for all power in heaven as well as earth was given to Him, and thus was to be proved by His ascension.\* Not even on the descent of the Holy Ghost, (although they were "endued with power from on high," and were thus brought into the understanding of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven, in their own personal experience of union with the risen Jesus, as Man having all power in heaven as well as earth) were they led to the discovery "that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs with them in this." In order to this, a fresh revelation was needed; another "opening of heaven," and direct communication to him who had had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and had opened it to the Jews (Acts 2:1-47 :), now likewise to open it to the Gentiles. The vision recorded in Acts 10:1-48 : is the display of God's cleansing, in a sovereign manner, and taking up into heaven that which Peter called unclean. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." And this was his vindication for going unto the Gentiles. "Forasmuch as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17.) "The mystery of godliness," therefore, in this part at least, was now clearly revealed, "preached unto the Gentiles."

[\*The church is brought into all the glory of her risen Head, and therefore partakes of both the earthly and heavenly glory. But when we speak characteristically, we say the church has the heavenly, and Israel the earthly glory; because the heavenly is that which distinguishes our calling, and sets us so far above Israel's calling. But now the Lord is not in earthly glory, nor is Israel in earthly glory; therefore the church only looks at her heavenly calling.] But the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles (Col 1:27) was not yet fully developed. For this another agent was specially raised up, not merely as the witness of resurrection life, but of ascension glory — even the apostle of the Gentiles. He received no commission from Jesus on the earth, but from Jesus "received up in glory." The thing to which he was specially to witness was the glory to which Christ was exalted, and unto which the saints quickened by the Spirit were also called. The other apostles "bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning" (John 14:27). "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one [be ordained to] be a witness with us of His resurrection." They were witnesses to the fact of the resurrection of Jesus. But Paul was witness to something beyond this fact. "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth; for thou shalt be His witness of what thou hast seen and

heard" (Acts 22:14-15). And when he would assert the authority of his commission in the strongest way, he notices its distinction from that of the others: — Paul an apostle (not of men, nor by man, but) by Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead. It was Jesus Who appeared when in the way; and there shone around about him "a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun," so that he fell to the earth. Peter, James, and John were eye-witnesses of His majesty at the transfiguration; but Paul, as subsequently John, of His majesty after His ascension. This was what he had seen, and of which he was to witness, according to the word of the Lord, Who raised him from the earth to which he had fallen. "Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in which I will appear unto thee" (Acts 26:16).

"Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." God has never adopted any remedies, but His works have been all arranged according to the counsel of His own wisdom. True, His works may appear to our short-sightedness remedial, because He will show that His purpose alone can stand by the failure of the creature under the highest possible advantages. But there is a fulness of time for the development of that which is in His mind, and His own eternal counsel is the last manifestation. All the blessing and glory was planned and secured in Christ Jesus before the world began. First of all, earthly blessing fails, and then those who are outwardly called into the kingdom of heaven fail; but in the end the stability of both in Christ Jesus is to be shown. Hence the apostle speaks of himself and others, "Let a man so account of as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God;" not the one without the other; not simply preachers of the gospel, but those who would be able to set forth the bearing of God's dispensations.

It is remarkable how men may be misguided by a word. It is a just rule that the meaning of a word is not to be judged of by its currency at any time, but by the sense in which the writer used it. Now the word "mystery" conveys to our natural minds an idea quite distinct from that in which the Spirit of God uses it. The mysteries\* of God are not the secrets known in His own breast, but His secrets disclosed. What was known unto Him before the foundation of the world is now made known to us. For example, it was a secret in God's own bosom, from the beginning of the world, that all His earthly arrangements were made in reference to Israel. But that purpose was revealed to and by Moses. "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deu 32:8). True, such a statement may appear mysterious to the world, in the popular sense; but to faith it is the announcement of a wonderful fact, involving the whole history of the world. True, most true, that there are mysteries in God (for we know but in part); but it is not with these that we have to do, but with those which He has revealed. Because so few have been faithful stewards of the mysteries\*\* of God, does the church lie in the state in which it is, having confounded things that differ; and, instead of being guided into all truth, is quite content to think that a single truth is enough for it to know, and that all God's truth is necessarily crowded into that which ministers to its self-complacency.

[\*"This does not mean anything inexplicable, but what cannot be known until it is revealed."  
Williams' Concordance.]

[\*The perversion of this expression, by impious Popish and pious Protestant fraud, can hardly have escaped the notice of any intelligent reader of the scripture. The term "mysteries" has been applied to Baptism and the Lord's Supper (as for example in the Liturgy of the church of England: "He has instituted and ordained holy mysteries." Communion Service). Hence stewards of the mysteries are dispensers of these! If there be a mysterion in the popular sense, there must be the memuemanoi, the initiated, and the Hierophant. Thus by taking advantage of popular ignorance, even Protestant ministers of the gospel unblushingly exalted themselves into the priesthood. It is sufficient to notice that the word "mystery" occurs between twenty and thirty times in the New Testament, and in no single instance is it applied either to Baptism or the Lord's Supper. The fact of the word being rendered in the Vulgate several times "Sacramentum" may give the clue to this strange perversion.]

Whilst the grace of the Gentile dispensation was a secret only made known on the work of Christ being finished, its unparalleled glory was that "which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive," till God revealed it by His Spirit. It was not the glory which forms the chief subject of direct prophecy, for that is earthly glory; it may glance at the other allusively, but Jewish expectation was not very wrong. It is not by violently wresting language, and giving it a meaning quite different from the literal, which would necessarily be general and vague, that we shall be most fully enabled to enter into the glory into which the faithful are now brought by the resurrection of Jesus, but by learning that the subject was entirely new, unthought and unheard of before. The scriptural testimony to this is very abundant; and it appears to me important, in every point of view, to see that the present dispensation is completely sui generis — not an improvement of the preceding, or an introduction to the coming one, but so entirely isolated that its directory of conduct would only apply to itself, that I would note some of the most striking scriptures on this most interesting point. The language of our Lord (Mat 13:1-58 :) has already been alluded to; but it is important on this point, as showing that the things which were secret before were now revealed. "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; for verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." In Mark 4:11 there is a little variation, interesting in this point, as pointing to the kingdom itself as having been heretofore a secret thing — "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." But as the Lord Himself intimated to His disciples that they were not in the capacity of entering into the things of which He was both the Subject and the Communicator, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; and He will show you things to come." We must therefore look to the testimony of the Spirit through the apostles. And here I would notice that very remarkable testimony to the novelty and distinctness of this present dispensation in Rom 16:25-26. "Now to Him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen."

Again (1Co 2:6-10), "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world; but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained

before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God: that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." It would be necessary to transcribe the whole of 2Co 3:1-18; 2Co 4:1-18; 2Co 5:1-21, as bearing on the point. It will be sufficient at present to notice the marked contrast between the former and present dispensation. The ministration of death, written and engraven on stones was glorious; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth." This is sufficient to show that there is real contrast rather between the former and the present dispensations, — that they are, in fact, as opposite as death and life.

1889 225 I would now state the more direct testimony of the same apostle in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. "Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." The preceding verses state what God's good pleasure had been, even the secret of God in His mind from all eternity, not only to have a people on the earth in whom He would be glorified, but sons in heaven; with the Son of His love joint-heirs of all the glory He had given Him. The stability both of that in heaven as well as that on earth could only be in Christ. But the great wonder was that in the introducing of this novel and transcendent glory, it was not confined to those "whose were the promises," but coming in a way of direct sovereignty on the part of God, and for the express purpose of displaying in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace, "that the Gentiles might praise God for His mercy." The apostle therefore places Jews and Gentiles entirely on the same level as to this, "In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, that we (Jews) should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ; in Whom ye also (Gentiles) after that ye had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance (as common to both) until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

There was a twofold secret of God now made known. That any should have been chosen to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, was a thing quite novel to those whose proper expectation was Messiah over them, as the Son of David in earthly glory. But there was this besides, that it was to be preached unto the Gentiles, and that they were called into participation of it. Accordingly we find the apostle resuming the subject, Eph 3:1-21 :, "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward (Gentiles), how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His

promise in Christ by the gospel; that I should preach among the Gentiles the untraceable\* riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

[\* "Unsearchable" in our translation does not convey the idea; it is that of which there is no trace. The same word (Rom 11:33) is rendered "past finding out." Indeed both cases allude to this revealed mystery, and I believe are intended by the Spirit to convey to our minds that there was no trace of it or clue to it until it was actually revealed.] And here the mischief of confounding all things, and limiting God to that which occupies our mind, is very apparent. The church has at the same time forgotten her distinctive glory, and learnt to be high-minded: to judge from the thoughts of most Christians, one would think that the Jews were kept distinct, and in their present state, to afford them evidence of God's favour to themselves. How little is it remembered, that the mystery made known, was, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ. But there is this, most important to be noticed, that the mystery, then revealed to the apostles by the Spirit, had not in other ages been made known to the sons of men, but from the beginning of the world had been hid in God. Now of "the restitution of all things God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets, since the world began;" so that it cannot be the same with the mystery now made known, and clearly proves that this mystery had not been the subject of prophetic testimony. "Restitution" necessarily implies a previous state, even that in which God had pronounced all things to be very good; and again shall God rest in them when brought back by Him, the Redeemer, even Christ Jesus. But the subject of this mystery had no previous existence, except in the purpose of God, and hence it is always dated by the Holy Spirit, as anterior to creation; "according as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); "according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who hath abolished death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the gospel" (2Ti 1:9). "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due time manifested His word through preaching" (Tit 1:2). This proves its complete independence of, and distinctness from, anything that had been known since the world began. Things might have been types of it, or, as the fulness of time approached, there might have been intimations of it; but it was not connected at all in character with those things. It is not a speculative matter, but one of great practical importance; as surely the bulk of scriptural testimony fully demonstrates. In this Epistle for instance, wherein we find the fulness of the church set forth, we find the Spirit in the apostle so speaking as to show us that this with Christ was the great mystery now made known. It is distinctly expressed in Eph 5:1-33, "this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church," and again (Eph 6:19), "and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." The great mystery then, or secret in the divine mind, now divulged, besides Christ the Head in heavenly glory over all things, is the church, the body of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." It is "the church of the first-born [ones], which are written in heaven."\* Now unless its distinct glory, as blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, is seen, its character and service cannot be known. Heavenly glory was that which was not revealed to the saints of old; how could it be until His appearance? even of the Son of man Who is in heaven? "The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's, but the

earth hath He given to the children of men."

[\* prototokon en ouranois. Israel was God's first-born on earth; "Israel is my son, even my first-born;" (Exo 4:22) "to them pertaineth the adoption;" and it is as the first-born on earth, that I understand the elder brother in Luk 15:1-32 ;, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine;" "but the last was first."]

True, the patriarchs looked for a heavenly city, and confessed themselves, strangers and pilgrims on earth; so likewise David. But whatever the Spirit of Christ in them did testify, was but obscurely; "they searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow, unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things the angels desire to look into" (1Pe 1:10). Abraham, the father of us all, had promises of seed numerous as the stars of heaven, and as the dust of the earth, and doubtless the one to be highly exalted above the other. But the church, in oneness of Spirit and of glory with the risen Lord, into which the saints are now brought, was not known till Jesus was glorified and the Holy Ghost had come. Hence we find the almost universal tenor of prophetic testimony is to earthly glory, which could be apprehended before that Jesus was glorified, although only secured in and by Him. Now the effect of taking promises of earthly glory, and applying them to heavenly, has been to lose sight of the great purpose of God "to reconcile all things to Himself, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth," by the blood of the cross (Col 1:20): and "to gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth" (Eph 1:10), thus placing the stability of both on a sure basis. But this is not all; for the church, taking that to herself which does not distinctly belong to her, has lost sight of what does, and hence has been exhibiting a Jewish character, rather than representing the fulness of Christ. But before entering at any length into this, there are a few more testimonies to the point before us to be noticed. "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God, which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; the mystery which hath been hid from ages and 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" (Col 1:25-27). Again, Col 2:2-4), "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ; wherein (i.e., in the mystery, margin) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Now here we have, first, the originality of that which was in the mystery, that it had been previously hidden from ages and generations.

2. That there are riches of glory in it.

3. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up in it.

Well therefore might he ask the Colossians to pray that God would open a door of utterance "to speak the mystery of Christ." The passage in 1Ti 3:16 has been referred to for the point then in hand; but I would again notice that the fact of Incarnation was not a Jewish expectation, however the promise of Immanuel may appear to us to have properly raised it. For we find that it was a

matter of distinct revelation to Peter. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven;" "God manifested in the flesh" was the great secret; He had spoken to them in divers ways before, but now He comes so near as to speak by His Son. This is the basis of everything: the moment the mystery of Christ is revealed, then, as led by the Spirit, are we capable of looking backward or forward into the counsels of God. With the soul resting on the great fact of God manifested in the flesh, as spiritual we may judge all things, see the several hearings of God's precious revelations, and learn the important truth of the instability of every creature out of God, — in a word, learn "Christ the power of God and wisdom of God."

1889 240 I would now briefly advert to the distinctness of the glory, into fellowship with which the saints are brought, having nothing at all analogous to it previous to its revelation. It appears to me of importance to remark that the glory of the church is distinctive and characteristic; that it was not directly revealed, previously to the coming down of the Holy Ghost. "None of the princes of this world knew it:" it was what "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man to conceive." It is best seen by contrasting it with the proper Jewish expectation of Messiah. Now it is most clear that they looked upon their Messiah as the Redeemer to deliver them and their land; to restore it to fruitfulness, to make them glorious (Mic 5:8) as a people in the eyes of all among whom they had been despised; to make them (Isa. 2: 23; Mic 5:7; Zec 8:23.) also the channel of blessing to others; and all this when Jehovah should be their King. "Then the moon shall be confounded and the sun ashamed when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously" (Isa 24:23). Besides all this, there was the real moral glory, "Thy people shall be all righteous," a people in whose hearts the Spirit of God dwelt. "A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will give you an heart of flesh and I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and do them, and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers" (Ezek. 26: 26-28).

Now both in this place and in Jer 31:1-40 :, where the new covenant\* with the house of Israel is stated at large, its connection with earthly blessing, and the glory of Jerusalem, and the land is most definitely marked; and it is only because we have read those accounts with pre-occupied minds that their strict application to Israel should ever have been questioned. Our Lord evidently alludes to this in His conversation with Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye (Jews) must be born again;" their earthly blessing was only to be secured by God giving them His Spirit. And when Zacharias under the Holy Ghost, prophesied, it was evidently to the glory of Israel under Messiah. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed\*\* His people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life" (Luk 1:1-80 :).

[\* It is remarkable that direct allusion to this in the New Testament is only made in Hebrews, where it is quoted at length as to the fact of there being a new covenant.

\*\* This word in the Old Testament always implies power. "The Lord brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt" (Deu 7:8). Redeemer is not applied to Jesus at all in the New Testament, which is the record of His humiliation.]

Now the mystery revealed of the church is its oneness with Christ. The Messiah, though of, was distinct from, Israel: the nation was not to be brought into oneness with Him, but He was to be over the nation, to fulfil the good pleasure of God to it. A king and a people are distinct, though they have a common interest, for a king is over his people. On the other hand Christ is never said to be King over His church, but the Head of it as His own body, "Head to His church over all things"; the Bridegroom, and the church His bride: language which while it implies identity, at the same time expresses that distinctness which gives Him the pre-eminence. But the essential characteristic of the church is that its glory is heavenly. Those who believe in Jesus are made one with Him, not as "the Son of David after the flesh," but as declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." "The hope set before them is that which entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered." Heaven is now opened, and in it is the resting-place of the church in Christ Jesus.

"To be accepted in the Beloved" to be brought into that complete oneness with Him, so that the love wherewith the Father loved Him, with the same He loves those who by His Spirit are thus made one with Him. To have every thing which could be predicted of Him, predicted of the church, this was the mystery, the revelation of which made all old things to pass away, all the long cherished hopes of an Israelite were immediately given up by one who was thus brought into fellowship with the Father and the Son. What a word is that — "Fellowship" between the Creator and the creature, that they should have a common interest the one in the other! It would indeed have remained a hidden mystery, but the Incarnation of the Only-begotten shows how this can be. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should called the sons of God." "Now are we sons of God," though what we shall be hath not yet been manifested. It never could have entered into the mind of an Israelite, that such a glory was contemplated, as that any should be so completely identified with Jehovah Jesus, the God-man, as to have their vile body fashioned like unto His glorious body. But this was the eternal purpose of God, this was in His mind from before the foundation of the world; — "Whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." The Father not only prepared a body for Jesus to suffer in, but likewise a body mystical, in which He should be glorified; for He is to be glorified in His saints. His glory is not only personally to be exhibited, but to be exhibited in and through them. He is not only to bless by His personal presence, but His saints are the channel of blessing to others, as was originally promised to Abraham, "thou shalt be a blessing." So now the church is the channel of blessing, even in its wilderness state; out of it alone go the living waters. "He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Jesus is the well of life, but the stream is dispensed through the church, and what blessedness shall there be when the world to come is no longer under angels, but under Jesus and His saints; the stream of life immediately flowing from Jesus through them, in an unhindered course to others. They shall be a blessing, as they are called to inherit a blessing; they shall be kings and priests unto God, and they shall reign over the earth as kings, and make known (and who so well able as those who know what grace is?) good to

others.

"God hath called us into His own kingdom and glory;" "He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is said to Israel, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," not that they obtain the glory of the Lord. In a word, their glory is distinct from the Lord's glory; that glory is something without them, but the glory of the church is identical with that of the Lord; the church is the vessel filled with glory, the fulness of Him Who filleth all in all. This was a something so far beyond thought, that well might the apprehension of it make old things to pass away.

Again, be it remembered, that the present blessing and glory of the church is distinctly heavenly; Jesus is now in heaven, and His people can only be in Spirit where He is. It seems nothing novel to us to talk of heaven as our place, and of being in heaven, as our glory; yet what does this mean in the mouths of most but that heaven is to be enjoyed after earthly enjoyment has failed? That earth is the place for the enjoyment of the body; and that heaven will receive our departed spirits? But Jesus is "the Saviour of the body," "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." It was the brightness of the glory of Jesus the Son of Man, which filled Stephen with holy rapture; it was unto that likeness he looked to awake and be satisfied. But the calling of the church is now heavenly, its place now of rest is "in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." Believers now let pass old things, because "their citizenship is in heaven;" "they are no more of the world, even as Jesus is no more of the world." "As He is, so are they in this world;" as He is the heavenly Man, so are they heavenly men; as He is the beloved Son, so are they sons beloved; as He is heir of all things, so are they heirs of all things. This is their standing, though they be locally in this world. This is indeed the new creation unheard of, unknown before, which places in such pre-eminence the least in the kingdom of heaven. They are heavenly — one with Christ the quickening Spirit, one with Him Who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Here has been the mistake and confusion; heaven has been made the future instead of present blessing of the church. Hence believers have been Christians in hope, but Jews in practice. All hope of earthly blessing ceased with the rejection of Him in Whom alone the earth could be blessed, by those through whom the blessing was to be communicated: "the earth shall hear Jezreel." From that moment, as was most significantly taught in darkness overspreading the earth, and the veil of the temple being rent, earth was closed as to blessing from it and "heaven opened." Those who will be blessed now must follow Jesus the only giver of blessing into heaven, "whither the Forerunner is for us entered;" until He comes from the right hand of the Father, blessing from the earth is barred. What an interesting moment is the present, "the kingdom of heaven opened!" Oh! if men knew but the gift of God, and the present blessing held out to them, how would they "press into it," how would "they take it by force." Testimony might be multiplied as to the distinct character and glory of the present dispensation, as being entirely novel, and in no feature corresponding with any thing that had preceded. In a word, Christ and the church was the hidden mystery, the secret of God, until revealed by the Spirit coming down from Jesus glorified, not only to testify of it, but also to constitute it. As to what remains, I would apply the truth practically.

1889 257 1. It appears that the attempt to make all scriptural declarations of glory to concentrate in one has left the church with a very vague and undefined hope of its real glory and almost annihilated that which is its present glory. "There are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial." True that all glory radiates from Jesus, Who is the Head of earthly as well as heavenly glory. But to

understand the church's present position and conduct, it is necessary to distinguish as to what her real calling is. Now as the church is called unto the glory of God, so is she called to be an imitator of God. (Eph 5:1.) "To live godlily in this present world" is to exhibit the character of God in it, not as that character was displayed heretofore, but as it is now displayed in grace: God is dealing with the world in grace, and the church is to do the same. The only place where God is exercising judgment is among His own people. Alas! how completely is everything subverted: grace to the world, righteousness to the church is God's plan. His saints have reversed the order; harsh judgment on the world, and smooth speaking among themselves, have been a stumbling block in the way of the world, and settled the church in a state of self-complacency.

2. I would remark that the only nationality of Christian ethics is that they are the practice of those who are in the world but not of the world, in other words of heavenly men on the earth. Wherefore, says the apostle to the Colossians, "if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why as though living in the world, etc?" He would not have them so forgetful of their calling that Jesus Christ had given Himself for their sins, "that He might deliver them out of this present evil world, according to the will of God their Father," as to think for a moment that they were living in the world. Their calling was to conformity with Jesus; He lived by the living Father. What was He to the world? Nothing indeed more simplifies Christian practice than realising our proper portion as not of the world but of God. And there is no precept, however hard to the flesh, but what we shall find to exhibit to us the lineaments of the Divine character towards ourselves: the measure we are required to mete to others is that which God has measured to us. "How is the gold become dim? How is the fine gold changed?" To what has not the name of Christian been prostituted? For surely it is a prostitution of its dignity to apply it to the world's service in any other way than grace. "I speak as unto wise men: judge ye what I say." Is it fitting for heaven-born men to be worldly legislators and politicians? Does this prove that they are of God, or of the world? If the world hear them, is it not because "they are of the world and speak of the world?"

3. It is most important to perceive the distinct character of the present dispensation, that it is not an improvement of the old, a new piece put on an old garment, but the mystery hidden from previous ages and generations, now brought to light, in reference to the many predictions of the world's blessing. Discrimination here is most needful, because the discovery of the peculiarity of this dispensation immediately shows that blessing cannot be brought about under it. Righteousness, not grace, is the principle to order the world. "A King shall reign in righteousness;" and he that reigns says, "I will not know a wicked person: whoso privily slandereth his neighbour him will I cut off, him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer . . . He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight; I will early destroy all the wicked of the land, that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord" (Psa 101:1-8 :). It is therefore morally impossible that general earthly blessing can be secured under the present dispensation, which is one of bearing with evil, instead of punishing it; and therefore so long as the gospel continues to be preached as the testimony to God's grace, the earth's blessing must be deferred. That blessing will not, cannot, be, till God's "judgments are made manifest." Contempt cast on "the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering," ushers in "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

4. I would notice the fallacy of drawing any argument for the union of church and state, from analogy to Israel of old. Let it be admitted for a moment, that the principle of such a union was to

be found there, there was only one principle in action, 1: e. righteousness. God was then showing His wrath, and making His power known. He had taken unto Himself "a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors" (Deu 4:34). Such a union therefore was then possible, because God's avowed principle of dealing with man, was righteousness, and His people were then ostensibly under the righteousness of the law; His own people were the instruments of vengeance on His enemies, and their enemies round about them. But surely it is not so now. God's principle towards the world has changed. He is not making "His power and His wrath known," but "the riches of His goodness and forbearance." And His own people are called upon to exhibit His own character. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, long-suffering, forbearance," etc. qualifications by no means suited to order the world. This can only be done by Him who is a "Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The attempt has been made to apply Christianity to rule, and the end has been corruption in the church, and insubordination in the state: "the rent is become worse."

Lastly, I would apply what has been said to one branch of Christian conduct, in which, for lack of discrimination, we have lamentably failed, — I mean subjection to the powers that be. To these the Christian is required to yield implicit subjection; and when it comes to the alternative, to obey them or God, then his obedience to God will throw him into suffering from them. Obedience and suffering are the portion of the heavenly man while in this world. Now it has been assumed, hastily assumed, that, because obedience to the powers that be is so strictly charged upon Christians, and that those powers are "ordained of God," they must necessarily be Christian. Hence Christian privileges have been mixed with civil rights, and Christians have been looking to the powers to reciprocate to them protection and support for their obedience. There is hardly a more glaring instance of the way in which self-love and a desire of ease will make us forget the simplest facts than in the case before us. The powers to which the Christians were called on to show implicit obedience were heathen emperors and magistrates, their most bitter persecutors; and yet they were ordained of God. Nebuchadnezzar, into whose hands God committed such largeness of power, was as much ordained of God as our Edward VI, and a Christian's obedience to a Nero was on the same principle as to Justinian. In fact we have limited God to our notions of propriety; we will hardly permit Him to use the instruments He chooses for holding the world in some degree of order, even now; and therefore we take the ordering of it into our own hands. God paid Nebuchadnezzar for his services that he served against Tyre, by giving him the land of Egypt (Eze 29:18-20); and so God now honours those civil rulers in His providence who honour Him. But this has nothing to do with grace. Cyrus was God's shepherd (Isa 44:28), yet for a widely different purpose and a widely different reward from a pastor of His church. The principle of obedience to the civil magistrate is one which is entirely independent of their character and of circumstances. In the powers that be, the Christian recognises God's ordering and yields subjection, not because he is a citizen of this or that country, but because he is a citizen of heaven. Old things have passed away from him; what things he accounted gain before, he now esteems loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Saviour; and it may safely be affirmed that a Christian born as to the flesh in this country, but carried by circumstance into Turkey, would, as implicitly and as to God, obey the ruling power in that country as he would the king here. He is brought into subjection to God, and therefore owns God in all His ordinances. Nor is it unimportant to notice, that it is not said that the powers that be are ordained of Christ, but of God; not of Christ as the anointed Man.

The time shall be when they will be so ordained. When that shall be made known in act, to which Jesus has now the title (as it is written, "I will make him my first-born higher than the kings of the earth," Psa 89:27, "Prince of the kings of the earth," "Lord of Lords," and "King of Kings"), then shall He, as King, reign in righteousness, and the Princes shall rule in judgment. But till He, as the anointed Man, reigns, His people cannot be called to rule, — their calling is to suffer.

Beloved brethren, "avenge not yourselves," "be patient till the coming of the Lord." True, the world is in a dark and fearful confusion; but we cannot right it by intermeddling with it. But we may remove one of the stumbling blocks out of its way, by showing that, through faith in Him Who overcame it, we overcome it also; and that we are not in fear now as others, but with that before us which makes our flesh to tremble, and rottenness to enter our bones — "seeing on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming to pass on the earth," we can rest in the day of trouble, we can "lift up our heads, because our redemption draweth nigh." J. L. Harris.

## S. The Waters of Bethlehem

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### The Waters of Bethlehem

(2Sa 23:15)

How mighty and effective a principle is love! How sustaining in difficulty, how cheering in enterprise! It is true that all natural love takes its circuit round the creature and never rises above that level to God; and therefore the more it is seen in natural life, the more does it mark the creature's shame that not one throb should be given to Him that made the heart and gave it its sweetest feelings. But love is love still, when all that God is, and all that God has, become the unbounded circuit in which it finds its home. Love is the same but the object different, nor does it cease to include the narrower circle of human affections, but takes, them into one full object — God. But what can produce our love, what can give boldness to our hearts to love Him whom we have offended but His grace in Jesus? Here we learn His love, as it is written, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." And in that service to the Father's love for us, do we learn all the love of Jesus, fulfilling the word of truth — "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." This was the power that carried Jesus through all that tried Him in the days of His flesh — love, first to the Father, and then to us, nay, uniting both in one service, and always in suffering. He could ever say with joy, "I do always those things which please him," and, when going to death, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do." Again, in the agony of His soul, "Not my will, but thine be done." This was in no way a work of mere righteousness, it was no question of His personal answer to the righteousness of God, but one of willing service unto others, in self-sacrifice to please the Father — and it was love which the floods that poured into His soul could not drown. So also to us, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end — even to shame and death. "Hereby perceive we love because he laid down his life for us."

Now it is the knowledge of this that subjects the soul in love to God and puts the believer into the position not of righteousness only, which is true, but something beyond it — the desire of doing all things which will please Him in the circumstances in which we may be placed. It is not a question of duty merely, but of love; we ought to walk even as He walked, not only fulfilling righteousness, but going forth in the Spirit in happy service to do the will of Him who is love, in the sorrowful circumstances of this sin-darkened world, giving ourselves up in obedient service to what love would direct in a world of sorrow. The bearing of this upon our conduct towards one another is clearly shown, "He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." He who is Lord and Master, having washed His disciples' feet, said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." This is far beyond righteousness which if alone would hurry us away from a sinning world and erring brethren.

Oh! if there is a dreary thought in these difficult days it is this, that there is so little perception in us of our standing in love. What would Christ's personal righteousness have availed us had He not loved us and suffered for us? It would have entitled Him to all glory, having humbled Himself, but it would have given us no claim. He became a servant to our wretchedness and the Father's love. This satisfied the desire of His own heart and pleased the Father, so that He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again"; while the sorrowful word, "Now is my soul troubled," told the depth of the sacrifice that heart could make.

Let us see how this truth is illustrated in the narrative of the mutual love of David and his warriors (2Sa 23:1-39). The whole history of David, the beloved, chosen and anointed of God, is a beautiful drama of typical events; and his conduct in them, imperfect indeed, yet in every scene gives some glimpse of that perfect grace that we have learnt in Christ. His election to the throne, his anointing, his victory over Goliath, his outcast state, his devotedness in it to Israel who were hating him, his submission to Saul, his lowliness and trust, his tenderheartedness to his enemies when in his power, his true sorrow over even Saul and Abner, and, at last, his triumph, and the putting of all his enemies under his feet, are surely the Spirit's living prediction of the history and character of Jesus from His baptism in Jordan and the opening of the love and glory of heaven on His blessed head, till He comes forth as the crowned King with His vesture dipped in blood to obey that word, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

During the continuance of Saul in power many were separated in faith to David. Day by day some were added "until it became a great host, like the host of God." They gave up present power and rest with Saul in the faith of David's anointing, taking part with him whom, hunted like a partridge on the mountains, they nevertheless knew to be the chosen of God and that his kingdom would come, while God's judgment was pronounced on the kingdom of Saul, of which the anointing and choice of David were full proof.

Here then, surely, we have the part of those who are now called to be saints. They are separated to the true David, to His interests and hopes, separated from present things to future, all of which are dependent on the Person of God's choice. They are bound up, therefore, with Him who is now rejected in hope. Need I say there is but one thing that gives to those whose true character is that they are "in distress, and discontent, and debt," boldness to go to Christ, even simple trust in that love that brought Him to seek and save those that are lost. And surely, nothing less than trust in that blood, which He shed to give them His own holy title to the kingdom and glory, can identify them with Him in hope. But when thus separated from the world to Christ and to Christ's glory, to partake of the fellowship of His sufferings, to be wanderers with Him in hope, to go in and out with Him, following Him whithersoever He goeth, in learning all His grace and all His beauty — oh! how will the heart learn to love Him in the depths of His exquisite grace.

Trial brought out David's attachment to Israel amidst such provocation; his refusal to resist evil against himself, his patient endurance, his trust in God. Surely it was no wonder that his followers loved and wondered, and that all their prowess was brought out as it were by this principle. They constantly erred, but their love seldom failed; they said indeed, in ignorance, when in the cave with helpless Saul, "Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand." And so also Peter, "This be far from thee, Lord," said he, when Jesus spoke of suffering and death: and when they came to take Him, Peter, in the same misjudging but true love,

in the spirit of Abishai, smote off the ear of the High Priest's servant. Personal attachment to their Lord was there, however they failed in judgment. But oh! where is this attachment today?

I do not say that it is not far better if love abounds than that it should be in knowledge and in all judgment; but — where is the love? How straight would many a crooked path be made! How clear much that is now involved in the obscurity of doublemindedness if all things were tried by love in the Spirit. It would not then be said or thought, How little may I sacrifice for Jesus, and yet be saved? How much of Saul's kingdom may I retain, and yet have part in David's? Nor should we so often hear, Surely there is no harm in this! It is not right to be so ascetic.' Let us hearken to the word of Jesus, "He that is not with me is against me, he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad," and there is nothing too little to be gathered with Him, and to give us an opportunity of proving our love. Is this becoming for a follower of Jesus? Is this suited to the glory and character of His kingdom? Will this please or displease our Lord and Saviour? These, these are the questions of love; and, surely, all clever advocacy of evil or the toleration of it, all the skilful alchemy of the unloving heart to divide the world into what is allowed and not allowed, all the power of heresy which detracts from the glory of Christ's Person, all the wiles of the enemy in substituting a prospering church in the world for the personal presence of its Lord and the glory of His kingdom — all are put to flight by the simple power of that love, which is of God. Nay, yet further, it is "love" that writes in full and clear characters, "Ichabod," on all that is so boasted in. If there is brotherly love brought to pass, and sustained by self-sacrifice — if Christians are the servants of one another, each seeking to be the lowliest, heavenly-minded, and acting on principles that get no recompense here save the Spirit's assurance that they are pleasing Christ — if faith which will sacrifice all present things and be a stranger and pilgrim because of the brightness of its future crown — if these are the things that characterise the church now, then indeed the solemn warnings of Scripture, when applied to it, are nothing but the querulous murmurings of discontented spirits. But if not, and the commandments of Jesus are not kept, and the dishonour of His sacred Name unwept and unregarded, then will love to that Name weep, and in sorrow of soul go on to utter its mournful cry amid the merriment of idolatry, "Ichabod, Ichabod."

"If we are beside ourselves it is to God; if we are sober, it is for your cause, for the love of Christ constraineth us," says the Apostle. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ; no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." "To him that overcometh will I give a white stone, and on it a new name written that no man knoweth but he that receiveth it." Love to Jesus made the Apostle beside himself, love to man made him sober; but it was all love — a love so like his Master's that he could say to them, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved" "seeking always to please Him as He had pleased the Father, that no perils could check or quench it. And in the midst of all endurance from the world without, and the misjudging hearts of brethren within, where did he look for recompense but to that day and to that hour when the voice he loved would say, "Well done good and faithful servant"? and the hand he loved would give him the white stone and the crown of glory which would not fade away, because he had pleased Him who had so called him to be a soldier, and then he would reign with Christ as he had suffered with Him.

It was in warring against Israel's unfailing enemy the Philistine, that David was in the hold and thirsted for the waters of Bethlehem. The war of the true David and His men is not indeed as yet

with flesh and blood, but with the mightier Philistine, the ruler of the darkness of this world; and surely as they are expecting, so is He, and as they are warring, so is He, in them. David longed and said, "Oh! that one would give me water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate." No command was uttered, duty was not called upon. Need so expressed never could have found its way to the cold heart of duty, and if it had, there were many suggestions at once to keep it still. The Philistines garrisoned Bethlehem and the well was within the guarded gate, and there was much hazard in the way. The thirst of David could not be quenched without much risk and why quench it? It would please him indeed but it would not advance his people or kingdom, and indeed could further no object but that of pleasing him. It is enough, too, if a soldier strictly performs his duty, and diligently attends to all directions given to him, more cannot be required of him. 'David has not told us to attack Bethlehem, it is his personal need only, and why should we hazard our lives to meet that'? Is not this the language of duty? but — is it the language of love? Has our Lord no need now, is He not thirsting now for that which is only to be obtained by the self-sacrifice of His people? This is the place of the loving believer, seeking to please at all costs the Lord of his heart and life, and learning by communion with Him to know not only His general commands, but what will give an answer to the present desire of His soul. "Filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." This it is for which. He looks.

Let us judge by His word to the churches, "I know thy works." What are they? Surely not keeping "the sabbath," and refraining from the pleasures of the world; not mere uprightness and integrity of conduct, or attention to what are called ordinances and acts of occasional benevolence! These are not the works that gladden His heart as the fruit of that faith that worketh by love; nay "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil, and hast borne and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted." Surely it is for this and more that He thirsts, and if His desire is unsatisfied does He not add, "Nevertheless I have this against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." Again, how this is seen in the message to Pergamos, "Thou holdest fast my name and hast not denied my faith even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth," (as though within the hosts of the Philistines)! How does His love appear to tell its gladness in those words, "My faithful martyr"! He had died for Antipas, and Antipas was, through His grace, faithful; he had held fast the name of Jesus, and in death had given the waters of Bethlehem to meet the desire of his Master's soul. And again, how sweet to hear Him say to Philadelphia, when love was fast receding from the church, "I know thy works . . . thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word and hast not denied my name"! and, as though He would give the fullest recompense to this, He adds "my" to every promise, "temple of my God," "name of my God," "city of my God and my new name."

These then are the waters of Bethlehem, labour, patience, service, love, faith, holding fast the name and word of Jesus. Faithfulness in suffering and death; works, the fruit of faith in all the past love and coming glory of Jesus. Works, not of obedience to the law of Moses but accordant with the grace of Christ. Works, that were in Him to the glory of the Father, love, service, faith, patience, in life and death. Love which seeks to please and satisfy, love which looks onward to approval, the spring and life of it all. Love which, when David said, "Oh, that one would give me to

drink of the waters of the well of Bethlehem," answered thus, "Then the three mighty men broke through the host of the Philistines and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem that was in the city, and brought it to David." How keen the hearing of love, how strong and skilful the arm of love, how undaunted how resolute the heart! David longed for the waters, and the waters were won; and as the hazard and peril were great, so the joy of the warriors' hearts that their love could be so proved. The greater the jeopardy the stronger the love; and these were the waters to meet David's thirst, as the willing offering of tried love. They had given up their lives for his sake, to satisfy his thirst and win his smile; and the waters so won were too precious for their gracious and loving master to drink. "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it, but poured it out unto the Lord." He calls it their blood or their life, for they had not counted this dear unto themselves, and the waters were as their life to him. And as in the days of His flesh it was ever the delight of Jesus to satisfy the Father's desires by His own faithful and loving obedience, even now what is His joy but that those that are His should glorify the Father too; and how, but by owning the glory of Jesus, being constrained by the love of Jesus to give themselves through Him to the Father ""He poured it out unto the Lord." All that is given to Him by self-sacrifice is by Him accounted so precious, that He gives it to the Father, as it is written, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples"; And, "being filled with the fruit of righteousness which is by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." All coming from the Father, through Jesus by the Spirit, and ascending up again through Jesus to the Father. Jesus is the winner of the fruit, for love to Him, personal attachment to Him is the intelligent principle that must work every deed of holy chivalry. The Spirit is the life of every deed as teaching the heart the love of Jesus, and working thus the will of God in us; and the Father receives the fruit through the blessed Son, for, "He poured it out unto the Lord." And shall we be careless about these things? Surely our gracious Master thirsts; the hosts of the uncircumcised garrison are this evil world, but yet the waters of Bethlehem are in it. The greater the danger, the more sweet the water to Him who thirsts; and the day is at hand when a loud voice will be heard saying in heaven, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ, for the accuser of our brethren is cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death" (Rev 12:1-17). (J. L. Harris?)

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