

WRITINGS OF J.N. DARBY: MISCELLANEOUS 4

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 4, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

37 Chapters

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Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 4

Thoughts on 2 Timothy - for the Closing Days

It is worthy of remark that the moment you get out of the epistles to the churches, you get catholic epistles and others which treat the church as in the "last days." In John, there were "many antichrists." In Peter, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." In 1 Timothy, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith." In 2 Timothy, "In the last days perilous times shall come." In Jude, "Certain men are crept in unawares." In 2 Peter, "There shall be false teachers among you."

It is at such a time that God specially commends us to His word; and He has taken care that we should have in Scripture what would guide us in the last days, when He commends us to it. After Paul's departure grievous wolves would come in, not sparing the flock. He commends us to God and the word of His grace. (Acts 20 See also 2 Tim. 3:14-17). We need the grace of endurance in such a day. And when one goes through the trial with God beforehand, he meets the enemy and the actual trial when it comes, and the distressing effect upon the heart is gone. God helps and sustains us in it and through it.

One is struck in reading the second epistle to Timothy, by the way in which Paul goes back from dispensational glory (as in Ephesians, etc.) down to natural and Jewish relationships of private and personal character: "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with pure conscience," and, "When I call to mind the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother, Eunice."

There is nothing he insists on more, than NOT TO LOSE PERSONAL COURAGE IN A TIME OF RUIN, no matter how great the ruin may be: "For God hath not given us the spirit of cowardice; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It is always thus. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries." "Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (i.e., the gospel and the testimony generally), nor of me his prisoner." Satan is to be met with confidence as a beaten enemy. This gives steady firmness to the soul. One has the truth, and knows one has it; and this gives quiet consciousness, and keeps one in the midst of the attacks of the enemy in an evil day. He is to be thoroughly courageous when all the evil was coming in, and was there; to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus"; to "endure hardness." It was when the power of evil had come in that he expects courage.

This is not the tide of blessing which carries on others; but the ebb had come, and individuals were standing and stemming it, and carrying on the testimony of the truth. It was not like the tide of the gospel at the first when "a great door and effectual opened"; but, rather, "be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God." It is then we require the power of God and personal courage more than ever. All this is "truth for the times" in which we live. (There is truth for eternity as well.) Chap. i. 9, 10: "Not according to our works," i.e., our responsibility. The history of the responsible man ended with the Cross. There atonement was made, and God's eternal purposes came out. The Cross maintained the responsibility of man and the authority of God. Through it, we get out by redemption into the state where it was His purpose and grace to put

us before the world began. The Church has nothing to do with this earth except to go through it.

The tide of the Gospel had gathered a crowd of people into this wonderful calling, but the tide began to ebb, and all were going back again (ch. 1, 15). Positive power is needed in such a time, as well as having the truth. There are two things that are worthy of notice; first, that we now have only the power of good in the midst of evil, but the evil is never set to rights till the Lord comes; and the instant the power of good is not there, you get away down the stream; and second, how the good that God set up failed so fast. But this has always been so. The counsels of God as to what He set up were made known, and the power of evil came in at once to frustrate the counsels.

Verse 12. " For the which cause," &c. He was a prisoner for having carried the testimony to the Gentiles. But he had entrusted his happiness to Christ, and He would keep it for him against that day.

In verses 13 and 14, he passes on the testimony to Timothy, who would commit " the truth " to faithful men, who could teach it to others. The Church had ceased to be a guarantee for "the truth," i.e., the doctrines of Christianity and of Christ.

Defection was the order of the day (see ch. 1, 5:15); and in view of such, as of the general state of things, Timothy was to be " strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The Apostle now takes up the case of a soldier, an athlete, and a husbandman. He must not be entangled with the affairs of this life, but be entirely at the disposal of Him who had called him to be a soldier. Striving in the games, he must do so lawfully; and laboring first, be a partaker of the fruits of it.

Paul's gospel and Paul's doctrine are positive things for the last days. WE ARE WALKING AND Laboring IN THE MIDST OF AN IMMENSE NETWORK OF SYSTEMS IN WHICH PAUL'S MINISTRY IS TOTALLY UNKNOWN. For it he suffered as an evildoer unto bonds.

How like to Christ's own words are those of the Apostle in verse 10 of chapter 2 | We now get corruption of doctrine (ch..ii. v. 16, &c.). There had been falling away. Thus (v. 19) individual responsibility (coupled with God's faithful knowledge of His own) to depart from iniquity. In v. 20 we have ecclesiastical apprehension.

Supposing a person says, "I do not see that so and so is wrong when Scripture forbids it," this those walking in the truth cannot allow. You cannot take the conscience of the individual for the rule of the church. Scripture is its guide. Thus we have to walk with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. At the beginning of Christianity we did not find this expression. It was more general, " all that call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Now it is " all that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." The Church should have been the witness for the glory of Christ on high, and is now mixed up with all that witnesses against Him here below.

In ch. ii, verse 24, " patient " should be " bearing evil." " In meekness instructing those that oppose " (see New Trans.), that they might be recovered to God's will from the snares of the devil.

The profession of Christianity has become the reproduction, under the name of Christ, of all the horrors and wickedness of heathenism. (Compare ch. 3:1-4 with Rom. 1:29-31.)

We are never able to judge rightly as to what we have to do and to meet in the last days, unless we are conscious that we have to do with Satan's power actually; the " Jannes and Jambres "

referred to were mere instruments of Satan. But their folly will be shown up, perhaps now, perhaps by and by.

The expression "silly women" is applicable to men of effeminate mind as well as to women. It is the turn and bent of the mind of the persons who are thus beguiled.

We here get Paul's doctrine (v. 10) and the manner of life which flowed from it. "Thou hast fully known"-i.e., had perfect understanding of it. It is a like expression to that in Luke 1:3: "Having had perfect understanding," &c. He had fully followed up his teaching, as having learned it thoroughly. The manner of life goes with it.

In v. 12 the emphasis is on "godly"; they will suffer. Things would get worse and worse. It was the old story with the world-either deceiving itself or being deceived.

He now casts us upon Scripture specially. In v. 15, it is the Old Testament Scriptures which Timothy had known. In verse 16 he embraces "all Scripture." Scripture is the point-that which was written. Peter stamps Paul's writings with the authority of the other Scriptures. He says they are Scripture (2 Peter 3:16). The man who can do this was conscious he was writing Scripture himself.

One may say, "How do you know that Scripture is the Word of God?" I reply, "How do you know that the sun shines?" If you say "It does not," you manifest the ground you are on, as denying it. If you say "It does," you admit it. God has spoken so as to make Himself known, and to make people know He is speaking.

In the New Testament the Holy Ghost comes down and vitalizes all the circumstances through which the new man has to pass. He takes up the little things of everyday Christian life. It is a mistake to suppose the Holy Ghost only engages Himself with great ecclesiastical things. As there is nothing too great for God to give us, so there is nothing too little for God to take up and interest Himself in for us. There is nothing so common as eating and drinking and dress. These things are here taken up most strongly. Even these things become an opportunity for the glory of God. God would never have us to act as a man; but always, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to act as a Christian. Thus the Holy Ghost enters upon the circumstances of daily Christian life, and vitalizes them. When the apostle writes of these things therefore, the words in which he wrote are the words of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 2:13), as much as when the prophet of old uttered his magnificent strains with "Thus saith the Lord," and then sat down to study his own prophecies, to see what they meant and of whom they spake. (See 1 Peter 1; 2.)

The man of God is prepared unto every good work, in his having departed from iniquity and purged himself from the vessels of dishonor. In chapter 2 he is equipped; in chapter 3 furnished unto every good work; in chapter 4 he goes to war. He is to "reprove, rebuke, exhort." This shows the signs of failure which the wisdom of the Spirit foresaw. It was not so much evangelizing as preaching "the word" amongst professing Christians who would not endure sound doctrine. All was to be done in view of His appearing and His kingdom. Then faithfulness would be manifested.

We should be more earnest than ever in living to Christ, as we are now in the shaking of all things, and the Lord may come at any time now. Worldliness amongst us is a sign and a source of weakness. It must be "with all long-suffering and doctrine." These are the elements that must give character to our service. If men were left to their own responsibility they would never come in.

So he concludes, " I am now being poured forth " (v. 6). In Phil. 2 it had been, " If I be poured forth." Things have gone further here. " My release," is the thought, because he had been in the combat as an athlete. He can say, " I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." It was the finishing of his race and wrestling of 1 Cor. 9:24-27. The Lord would preserve him to His heavenly kingdom, if he was not to be preserved on earth (v. 18). Earlier, his desire was that he might finish his course with joy (Acts 20) Here he had done it: I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

May we covet the same grace!

The Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 1

WE shall find that " The Acts" follows Luke's Gospel: it speaks of a " former treatise," which is the Gospel, but it follows it in its tone and character.

Is the style of the Greek the same?

Yes, there is no question with anyone that it came from Luke's pen. The only thing, and an astonishing thing too, is the thorough mastery of shipping Luke shows in chapter 27.

Had not Luke sailed more than once with Paul?

Yes; and he may have been to sea otherwise, as to that. But as to teaching, the Gospel closes with "repentance and remission of sins," to be " preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" and " tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Both those you get taken up again in the Acts. And you will find Luke's commission taken up too in all the sermons in the Acts, whether by Peter or by Paul. In Acts 2:38, Peter says, " Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," &c. In chapter 13., " Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," &c. And in chapter 13 you will find the same thing again: " through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," &c.

Why does it say " among all nations beginning at Jerusalem," as though Jerusalem were among the nations?

Because the message comes from heaven, and therefore Jerusalem does come in as one of the nations, though as Paul says, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Rom. 1:1(3.)

One thing struck me a long while ago in the beginning of this chapter, and that is, that Christ acted by the Holy Ghost as a risen Man, as well as when He was a Man on earth. This shows, if you reflect on it, that we shall not lose the Holy Ghost hereafter. There is this to be remembered also, that the power of the Holy Ghost here is necessarily spent very much in making us go on, but there will be none of that above; then, all His power will be our capacity for enjoyment. I refer to the second verse.

Would the word " began" in the first verse imply that the Lord continued His ministry through the Holy Ghost?

Yes, His ministry is looked at as going on. Both before and after His resurrection?

Yes, " all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was taken up." We shall not want the power of the Spirit to keep flesh down when we are raised-" changed." That gives a great idea of the power of the enjoyment--the divine enjoyment--which we shall have; what the capacity of it is.

Then the second verse is connected with resurrection but not with ascension?

No; it is clear if you read on in verse 3, " to whom also 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." Then there is the coining of Christ to the earth, and the restoring of the kingdom to Israel, and the power of the Holy Ghost meanwhile; but there is nothing about the rapture here.

This too answers to Luke's Gospel; in Luke 24:51, " He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," and in our verse (9), " while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

Does that word " until" in verse 2 exclude the idea of any private ascension before the public one?

Well, I do not know of any ground for such an ascension. " The day that he was taken up" is evidently His ascension.

Is there no ground in scripture for any intermediate ascension?

No. It has been held by some, I am aware, because of the expression in the garden to Mary, " Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father," while afterward He tells Thomas to touch Him; but that is simply a misapprehension of the Lord's meaning.

Would you explain a little the difference between His saying to Mary, " Touch me not," and the women touching His feet in Matthew?

Touching His feet was merely in a spirit of deference, a kind of worship, whereas the other has a deeper meaning. Mary thought she had got Him back again as Messiah in this world, and the Lord says, No, I am not going to be bodily present here, you must not touch me, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, " I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And there He associates His disciples with Himself as gone up on high; while Mary was made the vessel of the communication of this heavenly character in so calling them His brethren.

" I ascend," would not that be a present thing? Yes; in the form of statement, but clearly not as saying, I am doing it now.

Is not the word " touch," handle me not, do not detain me?

The word is ■πτομαι, used thirty-six times in the New Testament, and always rendered "touch" in the Authorized Version.

But He would receive homage as one risen? Yes. And He was putting the disciples in their place with Himself as One gone up but not yet gone-not taking the kingdom to be bodily present here yet. Then another ground has been given which I do not think anything of, though there is no heresy in it that I know of, His saying, " Peace be unto you," but He could not make peace (so it is said) until He had gone up and presented His blood to God. Now in Col. 1:20, it says, He " made peace through the blood of his cross;" and He says, " Go in peace" to the poor woman in His life, Luke 7:50, and again in Luke 8:48.

Would either of those salutations in John 20:19-21, mean more than, " be kept in peace?"

Well, perhaps so, but that is a great thing. But peace was made only by the blood of His cross.

Still the perfection of the work in Heb. 10 is connected with the Lord's having entered in by His blood, and so having perfected the work; could we say it was perfected until He had sat down?

Ah! I could not say that. By His "one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." You get not merely the clearing of what I am, as walking down here, but perfected forever so as to go up there, as well as having no more conscience of sins; and all by His one offering. That is just what the so-called evangelical church does not get at all, when it is talking of forgiving past sins, and getting into perplexity about sins to be committed afterward; and, some, like the boasted primitive church, even wondering, whether they can be forgiven at all. And then come in absolution and the sacraments, and that is the way they get forgiveness. But Heb. 10 puts the believer absolutely perfect before God, so that he has no more conscience of sins, but is brought into the holiest into the presence of God.

But is the work perfected before His ascension?

The work was perfected before, that was perfected on the cross; the resurrection puts God's seal upon it, and then for us to enter into the holiest, He has gone up to heaven.

But until the Lord had sat down, the work had not come to an end?

Had it not? The point the apostle insists on is, that the Lord is not standing, because the work had been finished.

When Stephen went in it was finished, but the Lord was standing then. After all, you see, "standing" is a formal thing-, I believe, to express that till the Jews had rejected the testimony to a glorified Christ the door of repentance was open. (See chapter 3.) He was not sat down till then. The work was finished on the cross, and God puts His seal upon it by resurrection, and then the full result follows.

And that carries us a great deal further than forgiveness and cleansing, looked at as regards this world. Here am I, a responsible being on earth, of course I want cleansing and justifying, and I get it; but I really get a great deal more. I have often said when speaking of the gospel, a man may have all his debts paid, and not have a penny himself to buy a morsel of bread with; paying his debts is a very different thing from starting him afresh with capital, and so on, after the debts are paid. We too are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

Take the Jews in the millennium, they will be forgiven through the work of Christ, but they will not be in the heavenly places. You must not confound the effect and application of the work, as regards the forgiveness of sins, with its full efficacy. We do get the forgiveness, of course, or we could not stand before God at all; we are cleansed and we are justified.

Could the disciples enter the holiest before the ascension?

I do not think they knew anything about it; the title to enter was fully there, but it was not brought out yet.

In the Hebrews Christ is said to be the fore-runner, and so there was no such thing as worship until He had entered?

No; but the veil was rent from top to bottom the moment He died, and now we are talking of the application of that. The whole thing, in short, was done upon the cross, even the resurrection was the effect of that (though of course Christ could not be holden by death), God in it putting His seal upon the work.

And on that ground peace could be proclaimed fully?

Yes, and the Lord could tell it beforehand. Peace was made by the blood of His cross, but I hardly see anybody that gives full value to the death of Christ. I do not mean as to the forgiveness of sins, but as to the whole question of good and evil, which has all been brought to an issue, in every respect, in the cross. I know I come by my sins, and ought to come, and cannot come in any other way in truth, but when the soul has got peace and can contemplate it, then it can see the whole power of good and evil brought to a point and culminating in the cross. There I see man in absolute enmity against God, and that when God is displayed in goodness; and I see a. Man, perfect in His love to God, and perfect in His obedience to God, on that same cross. I get all the power of Satan, with all the malice of man, and all the righteousness of God against sin, and all the love of God to the sinner, all united in the cross; and therefore I find there the foundation of the new heavens and of the new earth-of God's glory, in short; and all the consequences of blessing flow out. But then the application is varied so that everything in heaven and earth will be reconciled by it ultimately. I get the forgiveness of all my sins as a sinner, I am reconciled to God, and I get glory like Christ. The Jews will be restored in the millennium by virtue of it; but these are all effects.

Is the peace that the Lord spoke of in John 14 one of them?

Yes, prospectively, and He does not say " Peace be unto you" until after His resurrection. The two cases we mentioned in Luke 7; 8 have a special character. Neither did He call them brethren before; but then that was the fulfillment of Psa. 22, " I will declare thy name unto my brethren."

What ought to be the measure of the effect and application of the cross to us now?

Why, full. We are called and predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

With regard to our chapter once more, you were mentioning the Holy Ghost, could the writer have said that second verse before the Lord had risen?

No. That is when He has risen, and that is what I was noting; I get that a risen man has the Holy Ghost; it is not only he has a kind of help down here in the place of our infirmity, but after he has risen he has the Holy Ghost.

What is the difference between this and the outpouring in Acts 2?

Christ received the Holy Ghost a second time for the second of Acts. He was sealed and anointed in His own person, the Holy Ghost came down in a bodily shape like a dove and rested upon Him, but He came a second time for us.

But He gave commandments through the Holy Ghost when on earth?

Yes, but what I get here is, it is still so when He is risen. He acted through life by the Holy Ghost; He says, " If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils;" He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, and again He says, " the Father that dwelleth in me He doeth the works." The moment Christ takes His place as a man, the whole Trinity is revealed; He publicly- takes His place with the godly remnant at His baptism; the Holy Ghost comes down, the Son was there, and the Father owns Him; and that is when Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are revealed together. Then it is written of Him, " and him hath God the Father sealed;" and John says specifically, " upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And now He was going to baptize with the Holy Ghost, founded upon His own blood-shedding, because we could not receive the Holy Ghost until redemption was finished.

But could Peter understand Psa. 109 as he uses it in verse 20, before he had received the Holy Ghost?

Ah, there you get the value of " he opened their understanding to understand the scriptures." That is what enabled him; and that is one of the points we have to notice, the difference between intelligence and power; there was power when the Holy Ghost came down, but they received intelligence before they got power. In Luke 24:44, it says, "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them [this is after the resurrection], Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you." Now He had opened their understanding, and Peter could explain Psa. 109, but they had not got power, and therefore they go on in their old way, casting lots.

But could He say He gave commandments by the Holy Spirit while He was down here?

I do not know why He should not; He worked miracles by the Holy Ghost.

But could they receive them?

That is another thing; their capacity. The capacity to give, and the capacity to receive, are very different. The Lord attributes to them the capacity to receive, He says to them, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," He attributed to them what belonged to them in the position they were in, though they had never found it out. There is all the difference between His speaking to them in the Spirit, and their capacity to receive what He said. He gave commandments by the Spirit, but they had not the Holy Ghost. He comes down in chapter 2.

In our second verse it does not seem to be at all a question of the state of the disciples, but the great truth of the Lord Himself risen and acting by the Holy Ghost?

Just so.

Then do you believe that they had seen the Father?

They had seen the Father in Christ. God Himself dwells in "light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, or can see."

Would that passage "he now liveth by the power of God" be connected with His giving commandments?

That is His resurrection, but He raised Himself from the dead too. Divine power was always in Him.

A risen state is a new thing, more new in one sense than ascension; a risen man is a totally new thing. Having passed death, and passed judgment, and passed Satan's power, and passed sin, and everything, when you get the man raised, then is the grand change; resurrection is the grand new thing. It is not ascension that we are justified by, you will never find that, but He is "raised again for our justification."

The point in the state of the disciples here is that they had not power, but had understanding, though that did not take them out of Jewish apprehensions; they had no guidance by the Holy Ghost, but they go and draw lots. Probably the Lord directed them in that, I do not doubt it, and Matthias was numbered with the twelve.

Then they had intelligence?

Yes. They had capacity to understand but not to display power.

I suppose their referring to the Lord in the matter of the lot was definite in that way?

Yes. I know people call Paul the twelfth, that thought is old enough, but I think he was a totally distinct thing.

It is said of all of them that He opened their understandings; in Luke, is it not?

Yes, quite so, it was when He was eating the fish with them.

Matthias, would he be there, because it says, he continued with them?

Yes.

"I have 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;" what is that?

That is fresh revelations, not the understanding of the scriptures, but things the Lord could not tell them then.

There is the breathing on them?

Breathing on them would imply the communication of the Spirit as to intelligence.

Would it be too the communication of risen life?

Yes, I suppose so, as God breathed into Adam at first the breath of life. It is connected also with "whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." (John 20:23.)

"Ordained" in verse 22, is not altogether warranted, I suppose?

Is "bishopricks?"

Well, "bishopricks" is all very well, but "ordained" is all wrong, it is not even a wrong translation, but it is added, and put in; it is simply cc must one become a witness?"

What is the connection between "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and "whose soever sins ye remit," &c.?

They were then spiritually competent. You see administration on earth is a most important thing. It is a fact that whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is forgiven all his sins forever and ever; you cannot be too clear about that, but the administration in this world is very important too.

Then who administers the forgiveness?

The church of God does. "To whom ye forgive anything, I also."

Is there any sense in which the assembly forgives in receiving to the table?

Not exactly, it merely recognizes; but it might happen so, if a person is only then brought to the Lord it may take of that character.

What is the connection of resurrection life with the forgiveness of sins?

There was no forgiveness of sins before it, in this way, for there was no assembly.

How would you regard Psa. 32, "and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"?

I will tell you how that came about: David sinned, and a prophet went and told him of it, which now, I do not want. Nathan went to him and told him-that is just what I do not need. It required a prophet then to get it, and it does not require a prophet now.

The Lord could say to the woman, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"?

And that was administrative too on earth. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

In James, "if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him," is that administrative then?

To be sure, that is just what it is.

Is the breathing on them a collective thing? Well, they were all there, that is all that is stated.

In John 8 He tells the woman to go and sin no more?

Well, there was no forgiveness in that.

What do you mean by the church of God administering forgiveness?

It is all administered. They were not to go and preach without people getting it. "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," that was what Peter declared to them.

Was not that exhortation?

But as people acted on it; that was what they got.

Where is the difference between that and priestly absolution?

The one is the priest and the other is the church. Paul says, "to whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also."

Do you mean sins against other Christians, or sins against God?

All sins.

Do you mean they receive the remission from the church and not from God?

Well, read 2 Cor. 2:10. "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also, for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes' forgave I it, in the person of Christ." That is administrative forgiveness.

Is that anything but concurrent?

It may be concurrent, but it is administrative forgiveness.

Is it governmental?

Well, governmental if you like, I called it administrative.

If, in the case of James' Epistle, the man was under the chastisement of God, is it administrative then?

Yes, it is. As the Lord says, "whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted."

People have lost the idea of the present reception of forgiveness as a fact down here.

Is it not exceptional?

Every heathen received, and every Jew received, by the apostles, each and all were forgiven their sins.

It is the not making a difference between "perfected forever," and the recognition of such an one on earth by the administration of the assembly that causes the difficulty.

"Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," what is that?

Paul did so, and they were all put away. I see in scripture the believer come into a new place in Christ, where there is no possibility of condemnation: he is accepted in the Beloved, he is perfected forever, and no sin imputed to him. In the Acts they came in, and when they were baptized, they got the forgiveness of their sins, and had no idea of difficulty as to administration.

Persons now put belief instead of baptism, and then say he is forgiven. A Roman Catholic will tell you it is when he is baptized, and, after that, by the sacrament of penance; and a Church of England person will say it is when he takes the sacrament; while in the primitive church, so-called, you will find discussions whether he could ever be again forgiven for sins after baptism. But all Of them have totally lost sight of "perfected forever."

How does administrative forgiveness come in?

The sin is bound upon the person, for example, when he is excommunicated, and it is forgiven him when he is let in again.

But " whose soever sins ye remit," was said when there was no church?

There is no difficulty about that. The difficulty between the original forgiveness on admission, and forgiveness afterward, is because " perfected forever" is not known.

Could the Holy Ghost say now by a man as Paul said to the Corinthians, ' I forgive also'?

No; Paul had a power to speak as we could. not, not being apostles.

But could the Holy Ghost say that?

The Holy Ghost could do it, of course, because if the church does it, the Holy Ghost does, that is, if the church is acting rightly.

What would "in the person of Christ" be? That is because Christ was there.

Then administration has three aspects, it is declarative in the gospel; in admission; and in restoration?

In John it begins with remission, but in Matthew with binding, so- that they are not analogous, in John it is more flowing out; " peace be unto you," &c., precedes it.

" As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" is a mission in John, and the apostles are never named in John?

In the original testimony of the Gospel in Acts, when people were forgiven, it was administrative because a man was forgiven, then and there, of course, supposing that he received the testimony.

May I ask further, Would you say the administration of forgiveness is now only in the case of church discipline?

No, I should not. Suppose I was going to preach to the heathen, then the moment one became a Christian, he would receive the forgiveness of his sins at that time. Past sins then it would be of course.

But then he received it from God?

Weil, if he did not receive that too, the other would not be worth much.

You see when a person was received from the heathen, or when a Jew was received, he then got the forgiveness of his sins, his relationship to God was changed. In the thoughts and counsels of God all his sins were forgiven forever and ever, and there never will be any question of them in judgment; but supposing he became a Christian, he then got the forgiveness of his sins on earth, and stood in a different relationship to God, he was reconciled to God, and not before.

What is the difference between administrative forgiveness by the church, and the actual forgiveness of God? Say I preach the gospel, and a man receives the text of scripture, in which is the forgiveness of his sins?

There must be the direct agency of the Holy Ghost upon his soul; but there is a vast difference between the absolute efficacy of Christ's work for the whole acceptance of the man before God, and the change which takes place in his state from being an unreconciled to a reconciled man acknowledged on, earth.

Would you not say that Simon Magus had received administrative forgiveness but was not actually forgiven?

I speak of administered as being governmentally a present act, in contrast with an everlasting acceptance which a man has in God's sight; he receives as well the forgiveness of his sins here which he had not before.

If a person is converted by reading the scripture alone, what would that be?

Well, it would only be by Paul's preaching, or something of that sort. People do not seem to have got hold of the idea of the thing. Paul had washed away his sins when he had been baptized, but not before.

It might help if we took the case of a person who was converted but refused to be baptized?

Well, there was just such a case of a Jew who said he believed Jesus was the Christ, but he would not be baptized; I said I could not own him as a Christian.

We must guard against reasoning from a state of confusion, to what was the case when there was no confusion. Until you get clear of the confusion, you will not understand either the administrative forgiveness or the other. Put the case that Paul was preaching at Lystra; and that people were convinced what he said was true after all, but still said, " We will not become Christians," would their sins be forgiven them? As a fact, then, would they stand before God as forgiven people, if they refused to be Christians?

" Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Now, say I hear that text, and I believe it, am I not a Christian?

I cannot tell yet, I want to know if you take your place with the Christians; if you will not, then I say, you cannot be reckoned one.

But am I not forgiven by God?

Well, God will tell you about that, but I say you are not now forgiven here.

But I believe on Christ?

God will settle with you about that.

But I shall go to heaven?

Well, that may be, but you are not forgiven on earth.

Take the case of a Quaker?

I must leave him to God; he has not taken his place in a scriptural way, that is all I know. There is a certain standing-place on the earth where certain blessings are, and God has set this place up; the administration of it gives these blessings then. There is administration in the word of God according to which things were administered down here; " but that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." There it is. It is not reasoning about the acceptance of that soul for eternity; it does not say there that that paralytic man was saved for eternity, but that he had the forgiveness of sins on earth.

What would be the course then to be taken by us?

Go and preach the gospel to every creature, and get them to see clearly the details afterward.

Is administration the same as bestowal?

Well, administration is equivalent to bestowal, in a sense, at once.

" Thy sins are forgiven thee," would not imply that all his future sins would be forgiven?

Of course not.

If a person believes and goes among Dissenters, would he get the forgiveness administered?

Now you come back to the confusion, and I do not know anything about it. I do not know how such an one receives the administration of forgiveness in the present confusion.

Did you not say the administration comes through baptism?

Well, yes, with heathens and those outside it does.

" He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," is that administrative?

No. That is the moral thing, and it is God, not the church. This question in the present state of confusion is in many cases only theory.

But we know in places how busy Puseyite clergymen are, saying that they have power to forgive sins?

But that is the clergyman personally, and in another sense of forgiveness. They do not talk of administrative forgiveness at all, but of putting away the sin. I deny the whole thing there, and I say, Who are you? The clergyman. Who made you so? The bishop. Who is the bishop? And the whole authority falls.

In verse 3, " the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"-in what sense is the kingdom of God set before us there?

It is just going to be set up as the kingdom of heaven, as it would be in Matt. 13

This would go on to the glory, would it not? Yes. The appearing of Christ is brought out. Is it the kingdom of God Paul preaches?

Yes; he says so.

Do you connect Romans with Luke and Acts, as it says, " to the Jew first"?

Yes, of course, even more so than the Gospel and Acts.

Should the preaching now be the kingdom of God?

Not that alone.

At Thessalonica the offense was his preaching another king?

Yes; but in his ministry of the gospel Paul brought in much else about the Lord's coming and the Antichrist.

The Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 2

I think it of moment to notice here verse 1, because there is a general current idea that only the -twelve were present, that there were a hundred and twenty, and not the apostles only. " They were all with one accord in one place."

What of the " five hundred brethren" in 1 Corinthians 15:6?

There is no clue to that, that I know of. Very likely that may have been in Galilee, where the Lord had appointed others to meet Him, but there is no statement about it.

The hundred and twenty would comprise the whole assembly?

Not all who were converted, but those who were at Jerusalem.

Would it include the women?

Probably. Yes. In chapter 1:14 it says, " with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

But in verse 16 Peter addresses them " men and brethren"?

Yes, but it is clear that the Holy Ghost was poured out on women: " I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," " and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;" and Philip had four daughters who prophesied.

" By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," how are we to understand that in connection with this?

They were baptized into one body then and there, only it was not fully developed until the Gentiles came in. The Spirit coining. down upon them then did baptize them into one body, but the term " baptism" is never applied to this, except at Pentecost, in scripture, that I know of; though all come into that one body. In chapter 1 the Lord says, " Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

But the Corinthians came in afterward?

Yes, and they are spoken of as " sealed" and " anointed." In John 1:33 " the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," it is the second part of the work of Christ. The first part was the taking "away the sin of the world" as the " Lamb of God;" the second, baptizing with the Holy Ghost.

What would that mean, " fell upon them as upon us at the beginning"?

That is not called baptism; but it is just the same thing in effect; the disciples were formed into unity by the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon them; it was a special case with the Gentiles to show that they were all one. The body was not in its developed condition before the Gentiles were

brought in.

What was their condition before the Holy Ghost fell upon them?

They had intelligence of course but no power, like the disciples before Pentecost, as we were saying.

Would it be the condition of infancy in Hebrews 5?

That was the Jewish state before Christ's death and resurrection.

Would you not say that every believer is baptized with the Holy Ghost?

No. When brought into liberty, he is sealed and anointed, and comes into the general baptism; he comes into the same place then. I know how people speak, and God does not make a man an offender for a word; but you get the case of Cornelius clear enough, when God was saying, I will have the Gentiles in spite of you.

What would you call the action of the Holy Ghost in giving a believer his place in the body of Christ?

No action. He is sealed when he receives the Holy Ghost, it is not another Holy Ghost, and so he becomes a member of that body.

But in 1 Cor. 12, he speaks of Gentiles having been baptized into that one body?

Yes; it is merely the use of a word. The practical idea is simple. I do not find it applied to an individual; it is the same Holy Ghost and the individual receives it; if a Gentile came, he received the Holy Ghost, and was formed into the same unity, that is the important point, the thing to be thoroughly seen and believed, that we do receive the Holy Ghost, and so get into this unity. When a man receives the Holy Ghost he is a member of the body of Christ, only the difference between this, and sealing, and anointing, is important in this, that there are individual relationships as well as unity, because in receiving the Holy Ghost, he becomes a conscious son of the Father • I say conscious son, and he knows that he is in Christ, and Christ in him, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in him; there are many individual things you must not lose sight of.

Would the individual things you refer to be expressed in 1 Cor. 12?

No; that is a different thing. But there is " the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" and again, 44 at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;" that is all individual.

How are we to understand in Acts 19, " Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed"? They were only John's disciples.

Were they not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, I suppose Paul saw something in them that made him ask the question. But they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as risen.

What is the difference between anointing and sealing?

None. It is by the Spirit, and the Spirit is the earnest, but anointing is the general term; it is a figure; the leper was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil: and when God anoints a man, He puts His seal upon him, and gives him the earnest of the inheritance and all other things.

Would you expect that to follow immediately on conversion?

Yes, when one heard a clear gospel preached. But I could not expect anything; that is a matter of God's condescending wisdom in particular cases, or He might see a person who wanted breaking down first, or a thousand things.

There seems to be an interval in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8?

Yes, and so there was here too in chapter 2. I think it is gracious of the Lord to make all these things so distinct. I know what pious books say, that I receive the Holy Ghost when I am converted; it is all false, I receive the Holy Ghost after I am converted.

But the Holy Ghost works before?

Yes, of course, but my building a house, and my going to live in it when it is built, are two different things.

What is the "unction" in John's First Epistle?

The Holy Ghost, always. It is an allusion to the anointing with oil, after sprinkling with the blood. It is said of Christ, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, but Christ is never said to have been baptized with the Holy Ghost; you get "him hath God the Father sealed." Only remember, He was sealed and anointed in witness of His own perfectness, while we are sealed and anointed in virtue of Christ's work.

But the holy anointing oil was not to come on man's flesh?

Just so; and so Christ takes us out of flesh in that sense.

But before God does not anointing exist in every case whether known or not?

No, certainly not. These in Acts 19 were not anointed. I know no reason why there should be any delay. It was the regular thing when a man was sprinkled with blood, then he was anointed with oil.

There are many Christians who do not know what the anointing is?

The question is, Can they really cry "Abba, Father?"

Is that the criterion of having the Holy Ghost? Certainly; "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts."

Does not that imply receiving the Holy Ghost as soon as we are sons?

Naturally it does... If I find a person in liberty with God, he will say "Father," and also if truly at liberty he will say, I am God's son. People may sometimes say "Father" through a measure of training and habit, but such will be afraid to say, if they have not the Holy Ghost, that they are God's sons. I mean even when they may use the name Father.

But there is such a thing as judicial blindness?

O yes, as chastisement there is. But, otherwise, when sealed, the consciousness of relationship will be there. That is a very distinct and definite thing. Just as a child may be forgetful and naughty, but still it lives in the consciousness of its being a child. It may have conscience deadened and hardened, but it is never out of the consciousness of the relationship after all. So when a person has the Holy Ghost, that gives him the consciousness of being a son.

Did the Prophet Joel think of the body of Christ? is it not merely a promise to the Jewish remnant?

That is what it really is, but it is promised to all flesh. It has its place so far here as well. But it is not true of us as its full final accomplishment. But we have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

But will it not be true of them that they will be baptized into one body?

No. But God was here going on in a way with Israel for a time.

But the full prophecy was not fulfilled here? No. In Joel it says "afterward" God will do it, but here it says, " in the last days."

How can we divide it?

We have it divided for us here; only Peter changes the language.

Is there anything to be learned from the quotation?

If you look at Joel it is clearly this, "And it shall come to pass afterward"-after God has restored Israel, and set them in blessing in their land, and they own Messiah, then they get the Spirit; but they are not connected with Christ in heaven then, because Christ is down here on the earth with them. The Lord will do great things for them; He will restore them in blessing, He will be jealous for His land, and will pity His people, so that they shall never be ashamed; they shall know that God is Jehovah, &c., " and afterward I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Now here Peter changes the word " afterward" and puts in " the last days," and so takes in a distinct testimony.

Then would you say that those in the last days who receive the Spirit will receive Him, and the Holy Ghost dwell in them?

Poured out upon them is all that is said, but they have Christ present with them.

What part was fulfilled at Pentecost?

Just the fact of pouring out.

He does not say it was fulfilled, but " this is that which was spoken"?

Peter stops in the middle of verse 32 of Joel. What he really gives you is the fact that the Spirit was poured out.

Is there anything in the leaving out of the " of "?

No. But you get it used of the, Holy Ghost in scripture, as in " because he bath given us of his Spirit." It is important to see that the Spirit is personally present on earth; that is another truth.

What of " I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath"?

That is warning.

Then the restoration in the land will take place before the outpouring of the Spirit?

Yes, but they are distinct parts of the prophecy altogether; and they are separated on purpose in the way that Peter is speaking. Verse 30 of Joel begins distinct testimony; he states a complete restoration of Israel to blessing; then He will pour out of His Spirit; and then in verse 30, before those days come, He will send signs and wonders; you get upon this little remnant of Israel, the Holy Ghost poured out, with the warning of signs and wonders before the terrible day comes. But Israel reject this, as they did all the rest, and then Paul comes out with the Son in heaven; and the ground of bringing that out is Stephen's murder.

Will the remnant get this pouring out of the Spirit before the Lord comes?

No. Joel says ' afterward.' I believe there will be a working of the Spirit, as by Elias, and so on; but they will not get this pouring out. You get the restoration of Israel to full blessing, then the Spirit. But then Joel says before the coming of the terrible day of the Lord-the wonders.

The Lord delivers the people and then the Holy Ghost comes down, so that they are saved already before the Holy Ghost comes down, and then they shall never be ashamed.

Would the end of verse 29 be how- much of the-prophecy was fulfilled?

Yes.

But must not those words of Joel be the unity-of the body?

Why "must?" I have nothing to do with the unity of the body here; other teaching makes us know about that, but not this passage.

Why will not this outpouring make the Jews one when it comes? Will it not be a necessary consequence, because Christ will have left heaven then?

But can you make things necessary with God?

You cannot unite with a Head in heaven, when He is here on earth. Why is God to do in one dispensation the same that He does in another? Christ's place now is ascended up on high to receive gifts for men.... and now the Holy Ghost (-gives gifts, but gifts have nothing to do with the nature of the unity of the church. There is a prophet now, and so there was in the Old Testament, but they are different; you are assuming that God is pledged to act in the same way always.

Will the Jews have these apostles and prophets?

No, I do not say that You get Christ's ascension in Psa. 68, and His sitting at the right hand of God in Psa. 110 But what comes out between that and His return, on being united to Him in heaven, is not presented then at all. He gives gifts for the rebellious also, that is Jews in Psa. 68, but the apostle does not quote that, but says " received gifts in man." But in the future day the Lord will be among them then as Messiah, and it is not the same order of things. Christ received the Holy Ghost again for communicating these gifts.

Does not the fact of Paul's ministry coming out, bring in a different character of action?

Yes, but it is Stephen's death which is the turning point.

Would you be good enough to divide Joel for us?

In Joel 2:17, they are to weep between the porch and the altar; in verse 18, the Lord is jealous for His land and pities His people, He sends them corn, and removes the northern army, and does 'Treat things for the land.

Is the northern army Gog?

I suppose so, but the Lord comes in with many blessings; and in verse 27, "ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel." There you get Israel completely restored, and that is one division. Then in verse 28, He goes outside Israel.

Is that after the last week in Daniel?

Of course it is. He goes outside Israel and pours His Spirit upon all flesh, and "on my servants and handmaids, in those days will I pour out my Spirit," that finishes verse 29. Then there is another testimony, "and I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." The day of the Lord is on the northern army; the "day" is the judgment of the Lord. Verses 28, 29 are together; but verses 30, 31 are distinct from them, and refer to what takes place before.

In the Acts of the Apostles we have the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh but a preliminary testing of the Jews. In chapter 2. Peter says, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

But in Joel, Israel is in full blessing before the Spirit is poured out on all flesh?

Exactly; he says "afterward," after Israel is completely established in blessing. We have it now before, and here in Acts the Jews had it as preliminary. And Peter does not say that it was the fulfillment of Joel.

Would you say the Lord was present then when the Spirit was poured out on all flesh, in Joel?

Joel calls on the Jews to repent, and as soon as they do that, there is this northern army which is oppressing them and cutting them off, put down by Jehovah, while the Jews weep between the porch and altar. Then He gives them complete blessing, so that they shall never be ashamed, and they are established forever and ever, and then He gives them the Spirit.

Does the Lord come personally to do all that? Surely; how is the day of the Lord to come without the Lord?

Do verses 31, 32 then go back?

Yes, it says so, you get "afterward" in verse 28, and "before" in verse 31.

Then the whole of the chapter has yet to be fulfilled in detail?

Yes, it certainly has.

Why the weeping between the porch and the altar?

Humanly, it looked as if there would be destruction there, because this terrible enemy had come up.

Then verses 28, 29 are suitable to a remnant that received Christ as Messiah?

They are suitable to "all flesh."

But when the Lord comes back there will be only Judah and Benjamin in the land?

Well, but there is often a process going on, though you may not see every detail clear, I mean as regards Israel. You get Judah and the children of Israel their companions, and then the forming the whole house of Israel. What the Lord will do will be a long process, as I believe.

I get this, that the Jews are cut off in the land, but the ten tribes are cut off outside of it. In Ezek. 20 you have the restoration of the ten tribes.

I thought they came back after the beginning of Zech. 14, and so were not in the land when the Lord came down?

Very likely. When Gog comes up for the last time (he besieges Jerusalem twice in Isaiah), that is, this northern army of Joel. The Lord has already destroyed the beast, and then the Lord sets up His throne. Gog finds Him there.

The ten tribes never get back except as a remnant. The moment the Lord has destroyed the beast, He takes His throne, and the whole thing is settled.

Does Peter's preaching in Acts 2 imply that, if the Jews had repented, the whole of Joel's prophecy as to the Spirit would have been fulfilled?

Well, in a certain sense, yes, and the Lord would have come. The more you see, the more you will see, that the Lord's dealings until Christ comes are provisional.

But many are looking now for the latter rain of the Spirit?

Well, then, they are looking in vain; but it is in a great measure ignorance.

There are two kinds of gifts entirely distinct; I said so thirty years ago to Irving. Those in 1 Corinthians xii. are gifts of power, so much so that often when there was positive power nobody was to use it; it was all under the rule and authority of Christ's order in the house. And so there, therefore, I get no promise of the continuance of gifts; but when I come to Eph. 4, I get no gifts that are signs at all; but, after the foundation of apostles and prophets, I get evangelists, pastors and teachers, those which the Lord uses to build up His church, "until we all come." I get Christ caring for His own body to build it up, and also the positive declaration of their going on to the end; they are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." You have the caring for the church, and continuance.

What is "whether there be prophecies, they shall fail," &c.?

It means that there is no promise there of their continuance. Corinthians is merely power and the Holy- Ghost.

It is not a statement that these should pass away?

No, but there is no promise of their continuance though it may foreshadow their passing away. It is power, and then the Holy Ghost distributing to, every man severally as He will, but it is a perfect state of things; the gifts are in a certain sense meant to fail, and so their continuance is not the subject at all; but I do get the assurance of their continuance when I come to edification. The word of God never contemplates the continuance of the church, but it contemplates Christ coming. People say, How could God set up a thing and not provide for its continuance beyond thirty years? Of course He did not. He taught the saints to look constantly for the Lord as a present thing.

What is the difference between the talents in the Gospels, and the gifts spoken of in the Epistles?

I believe the talents are the gifts, the things that Christ gave when He went away. The Lord left the talents with his own servants and not with anybody else.

Is it not important to see here that we get the Holy Ghost connected with a glorified Christ?

Yes, here and everywhere. And that is what I was noticing that Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh for us; " therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Until the death of Stephen you get more of signs, and as in 1 Cor. 12, and the other gifts come afterward?

Yes, but you find signs too afterward... You see, until a man had gone to heaven, the complete thought of God is not brought out. We see God come down to the earth, and man gone up to heaven into the glory of God. As regards the cross, the immense thing is, not merely my sins are put away, that of course must be, but I get all the purposes of God founded upon it. I have man in absolute wickedness against God in the cross, then Man in His absolute goodness on the cross, and perfect obedience to God; " but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do"-absolutely obedient, and absolutely loving the Father, both; and then, too, at the cross, all the power of Satan is brought out as governing this world; while on God's side, I have His righteousness against sin in the cup Christ had to drink, and God's perfect love to the sinner also. I have every form of good and evil in man, and in Satan, and what God is in righteousness and love, brought out in the cross, and all settled-settled forever, and the consequence is, man goes into the glory of God. And then many other consequences come flowing out.

.... The entire question is settled, and it is no longer man upon his responsibility-like Adam who had to be tested-but man already tested takes his place in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal all this.

Did you say Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh after His resurrection?

No; but in ascension. He is exalted first. This same Jesus is made Lord and Christ, the One whom they had crucified. It is that that reaches. their hearts in the preaching-Him in that position, you do

not get Jesus preached as Son of God, but the rejected Man is made Lord and Christ.

Is there any thought of the oneness of the believer there with the risen Christ?

No. It is perfectly true, but it is not brought out here. Peter is dealing with the Jews, and saying, You rejected Christ and God received Him.

Would you say that so far as the testimony went before Paul's conversion, it was an earthly thing?

Well, not quite; because you get in this chapter, " save yourselves from this untoward generation;" that did not refer to the ancient promises to Israel, though it was on earth in a certain sense. Still Christ had gone up as forerunner.

Is there any intentional difference in the form of the words here, **■π■ τ■**," in the name of Jesus," (ver. 38) and **ε■ς τ■** in Matt. 28:19?

No, not that I know of: **■π■** is more the character, **ε■ς** the effect.

In chapter 3:13, " His Son Jesus" should be " Servant" Jesus, should it not?

Yes, it is a mere mis-translation. It is so again in chapters 3:26, 4:27, 30; in the two last **πα■ς** is rendered " child," but the same word in chapter 4:25 is rendered " thy servant David."

Is there anything special in Peter saying to them, " Repent and be baptized," or is that still to be the preaching?

It is not quite the preaching now, because people so largely profess to believe in Christ already. It is the same gospel though, as to the value of Christ's death and resurrection.

But if you were preaching to Jews, would it not then be correct?

Yes, I suppose so.... I believe it will be carried on in the remnant.

Then how would the apostles preach to Gentiles?

I cannot tell how precisely to Gentiles, because they never went; but there is no different gospel as to the foundation of it, whether to Jews or Gentiles.

But Peter went to Cornelius?

Yes, that is a special case entirely by itself. Could any who were not baptized at all be really happy?

Well, I suppose Christians might rejoice in the Lord who have not been baptized at all. Baptism here is " baptism for the remission," please all recollect that, the only baptism here recognized is for the remission of sins.

Would an assembly be justified in refusing those who confessed Christ, though not baptized?

It would not be in order to receive such; only you never get to the baptism for the remission of sins now, I mean to the ground the apostle takes here.

But how would you meet the case supposed? That depends; we are all in confusion about it, and there is no way out except patience.

But how would you deal with those who have been baptized as children, and do not think it baptism now?

If anyone is anxious to be baptized as an adult, who has already been baptized, he must settle that for himself.

But were not the sins remitted through the bloodshedding of Christ?

Yes; here is the doctrine of the bloodshedding of Christ for the remission of sins, and they were baptized on that ground.

Would it be baptism by the apostles for the remission of sins?

Whoever. baptized: Paul washed away his sins. Is not baptism death?

It is the figure of death, showing how the sins are washed away; still the fact of its being for the remission of sins shows what the administration of it is.

Did Paul preach it at all?

No, I do not get that, he was not sent to baptize, but he did not abrogate it either.

Does the commission in Matthew refer to the church at all?

The doctrine of the church was not brought out at the end of Matthew. There was no command to baptize Jews then.

Is there a single proof of the commission ever being acted upon?

No; but the question is the obligation of the command. The mission of the twelve was to teach all the nations, but in Gal. 2 they gave up this mission to Paul; and I should insist upon it that it never was fulfilled. Even to Peter, the sheet was let down before he went out to preach to Cornelius. But this is only proving what bad people the apostles were; they were to go discipling and baptizing and " teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," that is, the age.

Does not that refer to the seventy weeks?

I have no objection to that. Here I have a positive command to go and do something; I agree with you that it was not carried out, but that does not touch the command itself.

But is it not important to see that the disciples begin anew from the ascension?

Yes. Paul never owns them, nor even Christ after the flesh; and in that sense you must start from the glory.

I suppose Rome has kept to Matt. 28? Yes, and lost plenty else besides.

Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus, is it not?

Yes, practically.

The kingdom of heaven goes on, I suppose, until the Lord comes after the church is removed.

Well, that is a transitional time.

But will not the testimony then be like it was before the Lord first came?

You cannot have a John Baptist again testifying to the people of a Christ born in Bethlehem; and so coining for their reception. But you may have testifying to His coming in glory.

How does Paul's work stand in relationship to the twelve?

I get Paul supplanting the twelve as to the Gentiles in scripture.

Are the twelve representative of us, or are they the apostles of the kingdom, looking beyond church time altogether?

In Matt. 10 the Lord takes up the ministry in the land of Israel, and that by the twelve.

But does not the latter part of that chapter make a difference?

But Christ tells the disciples, You go and do so and so, and you must not say they are not to do it at all: I do not say that it did not fall through, because it did; but that does not touch the authority of the command. " Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then the chapter is divided into two distinct parts, after " Behold I send you forth as sheep," turning to a testimony to the Gentiles. Christ has gone then, for the Holy Ghost has come, and it is to be the Spirit of their Father that speaks in them. First, it should be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah through the disciples' then mission; and then He goes on to the time when the Holy Ghost should be there; and He does not think of the church, but says, "you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." The division is between verses 16, 17.

When is that testimony (ver. 18) borne?

When they are brought up as prisoners.

Have you not their mission to the Gentiles in Matt. 24?

That is yet to come.

The Acts of the Apostles - Chapters 18-20

This is general history of Paul's service; and we may see how cast on the Lord we are in work. Corinth was a frightful place of luxurious wickedness, and he continued there a year and six months. Then he must by all means keep the feast at Jerusalem, and he goes away, and through Galatia. I suppose at this time the Epistle to the Galatians had hardly been written. You get his first preaching in chapter 16, and now he is confirming the disciples.

Is Apollos introduced here for any special purpose?

I do not know, except that he was a very eminent laborer afterward. He went over to Achaia, so that they could say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," there. Then Paul went to Ephesus, and there was an uproar. We do not know when he went to Crete, though it is supposed that it was when he was at Ephesus. Just after that uproar he wrote the Epistle to the Corinthians; then Titus came back with the answer to the first letter, and Paul wrote the second. It tells us he was three years at Ephesus.

Was this trouble in Asia, what he alludes to in 2 Corinthians?

Yes, only it must have gone further.

It says "disputing?"

Well, it was discussing the things of God; as an old term disputing was used in that way, not with bad feeling.

In chapter 19 we get very distinctly the Holy Ghost consequent upon believing-"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" And in chapter 20 he calls the elders of Ephesus, and shows them that all would go thoroughly bad after his decease. "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things," &c. It is the religious body that is the spring of persecution; so at last, no doubt, the beast kills people, but the blood of the saints is found at Babylon....

What are the chief points in his address to the elders?

There is, first, the gospel of the grace of God; then the kingdom of God; and then the whole counsel of God.

What is that last?

It would have special reference to what Paul had to communicate. It was not that man was a moral being, and so on; it was much more objective than subjective; but the effect is to produce the subjective state, and the subjective state is always formed by an object.

It is not preaching about repentance that produces it?

No; but still you must preach that they repent; and it is repentance towards God too.

That is stated before " faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ?"

But that sentence (20:21) is abused in a violent way, putting repentance before faith; if it is faith in the full efficacy of Christ's work, of course it can, and will come after repentance; it is impossible that repentance can go before faith, because when a man goes with a testimony, if it is not believed, it produces no effect.

Is not this the first historical notice of the great deflection of the church?

I suppose so. The Epistle to the Thessalonians was written before this; and the second to the Thessalonians was written after Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.

Suppose a person took the ground that this was limited to Ephesus, how would you meet it?

Why, there is nothing about Ephesus in it. Paul is speaking in a general way, "after my decease." And you get the same things in Peter. It is Paul's ministry closing-that is the point.

But is it not fatal to all apostolic succession? Yes, entirely, so called. But I get apostolic succession in scripture, and that is in the binding and loosing which is conferred on two or three gathered together in Christ's name; and that is the only thing the power is passed on to. But here, in the vulgar sense of apostolic succession, it is positively denied.

Do you think that the mystery had been fully revealed to Paul at this time?

I do, because he had written to the Romans before this, and there refers to it. You could scarcely have the whole counsel of God declared without the mystery being in it.

Could you call that view of apostolic succession uninterrupted?

Well, no, not quite, because it must come to " two or three." It is remarkable how literally this has been fulfilled It is given when they are a remnant getting out of an old system, Then the Lord tells them to count the cost, &c.

Ought an evangelist now to preach as Christ preached?

You never get the gospel from Christ at all; you get it practically stated, but His is the gospel of the kingdom.

But you get "salvation," and "go in peace?" Yes, to one individual, but that is not His preaching about the country.

But the gospel now is the gospel of God? Yes, it is God's glad tidings.

Is that practically now, " He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, bath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life?"

Yes.

Did people who were quickened on earth know Christ's salvation?

No; nor the 120; at least Peter, the first of them, did not.

But "thy sins are forgiven thee," to the man?

That was no "gospel" at all; it was administration on earth. I do not understand any effort to show that the Lord could preach what is our gospel; how could He preach His own death and resurrection for salvation as an accomplished thing? You get some of the truth prophetically, in a way,

as to His death, and so on, but that is all.

But you find in Rom. 3 that the ground is now established, "to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness?"

Exactly; that is the very thing I am saying. There is no formula or rule as to preaching, but, taking all things together, here Paul characterizes the whole of his preaching by these two words, "repentance" and "faith."

Is "the word of his grace" the written word?

Well, wherever they could get it, this was partly written, but not all; it would be all of it when it came. When you get decay brought out fully in Timothy, then it is, "Continue in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them," and "the holy scriptures."

Is it "God," or "the word," that is able to build you up?

I think it is the word of His grace, but it is not without God-I am sure of that.

And no state of ruin can at all hinder the full blessing of that?

No, but on the contrary, it is the state of ruin that throws us entirely upon it. Only, as I said, in Timothy, I must know "of whom" I have learned, and "the scriptures." Cyprian says, if I get a channel choked from a spring, I go back and see if the spring has failed, or if the channel is choked. Chrysostom says of Matt. 24, that flying to the hills and mountains is flying to the scriptures. Not that I know much of the Fathers, for when I began to read them, I found them such trash, I could not go on.

How soon was church authority insisted on?

In the second and third centuries; it grew up gradually. It was rather official authorities at first than the church.

Did Paul write the last of all?

John was the last writer, not Paul; all John's writings, so far as known, were after Paul's. There has been a controversy about the date of the Revelation, but, according to the most received evidence, it was thirty years after Paul: at least it was after Paul was killed. That is why the Lord says of John, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee." He was the one who watched over the church until the last. Many learned Christians have put John's gospel as the last thing written.

What coming did the Lord refer to in that John 21:22?

His own coming again.

Not the destruction of Jerusalem?

The destruction of Jerusalem had nothing to do with Christ's coming; that was the judicial action of setting aside the people on earth. Morally it was done before; so that there was nothing left after that but his return. And the Lord says, Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. I think it is most important to notice that passage in 2 Tim. 3: " In the last days perilous times shall come: men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." And then he refers Timothy, as we have said, to the things he has learned; and from a child Timothy had known the holy scriptures. John says, " He that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us; hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Then it is by means of the scriptures we are to know the truth?

I do not know how else. You cannot hear them (the writers) so you must read them. The principle of church authority is gone in "the seven churches;" there I am not called to hear what the church says, but I am to listen to what the Spirit judges about the church.

What is " hear the church," Matt. 18:17?

That is the assembly in discipline, not about doctrine at all, or anything of that kind. It is not for teaching-the church does not teach, the church is taught. Teachers teach, apostles teach, and the gifts the Lord has given. Take away this horrid word " church," and say assembly; then how can the assembly teach? I do not know a more mischievous word than that word " church." If the church were teaching, you would have a hundred people talking together.

They say " a teaching body?"

Ah, the teaching body of the church, says the Romanist, and that comes to the clergy.

The " pillar and ground of the truth?"

The church confesses the truth, and so is the pillar and ground of the truth, but it does not teach. Suppose I were to say here to Mr. O., " Now I cannot believe you, O.' until Mr. B. guarantees what you say." What would that prove? Just this, that I do not believe Mr. O. at all; I should be believing B., not O. And if I do not believe what is in the word until the church says it is right, I do not believe the word at all, but the church I am sure I am very thankful to have been brought up to confide in the word; but if you come to real power, then you never believe in the word, but by its power over your own conscience. I remember a priest saying to me, " How do you know that it is the word of God?" And I asked him, suppose I give you a deep gash in your arm, how do you know what I have got in my hand is a knife? The trouble is, such things silence people at the moment, but they do not bow; it shows mere infidelity. How did the woman in John 4 know that Christ was a prophet, and not merely own that what He said was true? What He said was true, but because it was true, and came to her conscience, she knew that He was a prophet I quite admit there is external testimony to the word, but I do not believe that gives faith. You get the power of the word in your conscience, and you have the testimony of it there. As for the Apocrypha, in the preface of the Maccabees, the writer says, " I have abridged five books because they were too long." What

authority can that carry? And there are numerous "gospels," so called, with horrid stories about Christ's power as a child, so that one says they were obliged to shut Him up, lest He should kill everybody. But you do not find people quarreling with the Koran as they do with the Bible; it is because it is the word of God that they will not let it alone. They do not quarrel with Homer, or books that have no power of conscience.

Does the word ever act on the affections before it acts on conscience?

Oh yes, I quite admit it may.

And the different books of the Bible?

The word is like a dissected map, I do not want proof that it is all there; there it is, and all the parts fit in. The only book, as to external evidence, that you can cast any doubt upon is the Second Epistle of Peter; rather, there is less for that than for any other-not that I have the least doubt about it at all.

Could you give us an idea how the canon of scripture got welded together?

The canon of scripture is nothing to me, and the putting it into canon nothing either. You have the whole thing adapted and fitted in together. There may be more apparent difficulty about the Old Testament than about the New; but if you accept the history at all, then the Lord Jesus and the apostles distinctly recognize the Old Testament.

Are all quoted in the New Testament, as a whole, as well as separately?

Well, if I believe Christ is the Son of God, then I get Him taking a book which, on infidel showing, is not genuine, and opening their understandings to understand from it things about Himself. You get all in the law, the prophets, and the psalms; they are the three divisions. Then there are a great many moral proofs. Infidels will tell you there is nothing like the life of Christ, and yet they say it is an imposture-a man who set up to be the Son of God, and He was not.

But they deny that He said He was the Son of God?

Well, that is not true. Besides, when a man comes and tells me, God ought this, and God ought that, what is that?

People say He was not called Son of God in the synoptical gospels?

He is commonly called Jesus, and Jesus is Jehovah-Savior; you must get the facts first.

It is said that they read Clement in the churches of old, and Hermas too?

But then I do not admit that the church has authority in that. As for Hermas, what is the account you get there? It is that God took counsel with His Son, and with the holy angels, to put a pure spirit into a body, and then sent His servant-Christ-to set up stakes, and stake out a vineyard, &c., that is, apostles, and so on, in the church; but he did a great deal more than he was told, for he set to work to pull up the weeds, that is, take away their sins; and then God takes counsel with His Son, the Holy Ghost, His angels, what shall we do to Him for this, and they agree to make Him a joint-heir with the Son. Now, if the church authenticated that then I get the epistle is authenticated, but the church itself unauthenticated. Origen said that that thing of Hermas I have quoted was

inspired; but that does not make it inspired. Irenmus too.

What about the Book of Jasher?

The Book of Jasher was not inspired; but the king says to Ammon, " Go and look at that record, and see if this country is not ours."....

I suppose there is no doubt that it was Saturday night when the disciples came together to break bread?

... Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

In Acts 2 they broke bread from house to house?

Not from one house to another, but at home. Is that the Lord's supper?

Yes. Then we get general facts as to Paul going up to Jerusalem.

In chapter 20:11, is that the love feast?

I do not know; but they used to have it generally.

Was it breaking of bread on board the ship? No, not on board the ship.

The Acts of the Apostles - Chapters 3-17

What is striking here is that, after the setting up, in a sense, of the church, and saying 'Save yourselves from this untoward generation,' Peter then addresses himself to Israel as such, and tells them "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," not "when" but "so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." God had raised up His Son Jesus, and now He deals with the nation, and that after having called upon them to separate from the nation. God is still dealing with Israel on the ground of Israel. In verse 13 he says "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus," he goes as far as that.

The prophets, the covenant, and the fathers are all brought in, in connection with this fulfillment? (Ver. 25.)

Yes. The heavens must receive Him until the times of the restitution of all things; and that is still going on in fact. He proposes to them in this way the return of Christ; and he says, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." But it was supplementary dealing with Israel on the ground of the intercession of Christ, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But then the apostles are not allowed even to finish their speech, and Israel rejects the supplementary grace; "as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people."

In verse 26 does "raised up" refer to the fact of the Lord's coming amongst the Jews?

I have no doubt it does.

"Sent him to bless you," is that by the ministry of the apostles?

It takes in Christ's life on earth as well.

Is it "God was in Christ reconciling"?

Ah, that is "the world;" here it is, "ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers." This is an address to Israel, when Christ was gone, to say that He would come back again if they repented; as indeed He will when they do repent. But the priests stop their mouths altogether, and tell them that they must not preach; and then they say they must obey God rather than man. The priests let them go, and they go to their own company; but they have got their own company to go to, notice that.

Then we get another manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost and its effect in making them all of one heart and of one mind too. (Chap. 5:12.)

Had Peter this in his mind in chapter 2?

No; there it was "Repent and be baptized, every one of you," and " save yourselves from this untoward generation." Here the return of Christ promised on repentance; but chapter 4 is present christian testimony, the other was supplementary grace.

Were they thoroughly given up until the last chapter?

Well, this was outside Jerusalem.

There is no offer that Christ should return after this?

No, not at all.

Would you explain verse 21, chapter 3?

It is what the prophets had stated, that is all. Nothing more is to be restored than they had said should be. In chapter 5 you get evil coming in inside; then you find the power of judgment, and they fall down dead; and fear comes upon all within and without. It was the manifestation of God's presence encouraging His disciples. Ananias and Sapphira were lying to God as in the assembly, and the Lord's presence showed itself in judgment.

Does Peter allude to this when he says judgment begins at the house of God?

No; though it is the same principle. Then comes another character of evil-murmuring about the temporal provisions; and the seven are appointed. An important principle is connected with this, and that is the free action of the Holy Ghost shown even in Jerusalem, in Stephen, and afterward in Philip too. It was not apostles merely bearing witness, but you now see this free action in those who had the serving of tables.

I suppose Judaism was not thoroughly judged until Jerusalem was destroyed?

Well, not externally; but the patience of God still went on with them. You do not get the closing of all that, until the Epistle to the Hebrews and the going outside the camp.

Is the Epistle to the Hebrews supplementary and lingering?

Up to going outside the camp, and then there is no lingering after that.

What is " durst no man join himself to them"?

The people magnified them, heard them gladly, but not the grand folks, it would not do for them. On the contrary, it was they who put the apostles in prison. And then comes something more-angelic power is employed to minister to the heirs of salvation; the Lord sends His angel who opens the prison doors, and the apostles come out and preach as before. That is a wonderful display of power. " Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." And Peter testifies to the council, " We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior; for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost." Then God has providential things ready for them by the hand of Gamaliel. You get our New Testament Joshua here.

At what point does the primitive church lose its full power of blessing?

It gradually died down; though you get a point in " I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Then comes a question whether the apostles did not fail in staying at Jerusalem, because the Lord had said, " When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another," and they did not do so.

You never find a church among the Gentiles in such a state of outward attraction as at Jerusalem?

No. But you get here at Jerusalem, Ananias and Sapphira trying to deceive the Holy Ghost; and then the Hellenists murmuring, and so on. Then comes this action of the Holy Ghost in Stephen, preaching and confounding his hearers; and they bring him up to the council.

Murmurings soon came in?

But the murmurings are met by the Spirit of God. First, there is a display of blessedness, everybody giving up what he has; then comes in this murmuring about it all; and then power by the Holy Ghost to meet that. And power goes on in testimony all the while, and in chapter 7 Stephen is put to death, and that closes that scene. A person is sent to heaven, and that closes up Christ's coming back, because He has got some one gone up there, and that begins another thing entirely. In his speech in chapter 7., Stephen goes through all the dealings of God from Abraham down, from beginning to end, and shows the result as to man. Really the cross had finished everything. Abraham was the beginning of all the dealings of God; there were no dealings before, but a testimony only, not positive institutions or dealings (nor indeed promise to fallen man, though in the judgment on the serpent a revelation of Christ which faith could lay hold of), and that testimony ended with the flood. Then in the beginning of the world, after setting up authority in it in Noah, when that declined, God calls out a person who thereupon becomes the father of the faithful; he is the father of the race of God, just as you had the father of a wicked race in Adam, but in Abraham you get the root of the olive-tree.

Well, Stephen begins there, and gives the whole history of Israel, summing it up with this, they received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it; their fathers persecuted the prophets, and slew those who told before of the coming of the just One; and of Him they themselves had now been the betrayers and the murderers, " ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye." You have there the law broken, the prophets killed, Christ crucified, and the Holy Ghost resisted. And so that chapter is the turning-point of Israel's, and indeed of man's history.

What are we to understand by the Lord standing at the right hand of God?

I believe He had not sat down to say it was all over with Israel, until they had killed Stephen. It is a figure of the thing. The whole scene is exceedingly beautiful: the stones are flying about Stephen, and he kneels down and prays for those who throw them, " Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." You see in him the effect of the perception of Christ in glory; Stephen is formed into the same image. The heaven is opened too; it was opened on Christ at His baptism, but then, heaven looked down on Him as perfect, here Stephen looks up into heaven. The difference is total as to the person.

Why in 7:2 does Stephen call God " the God of glory"?

That was the natural title as to Israel. And here it is that you first meet Saul. We have been tracing the rejection of the truth, not only in a humbled Christ, but in a continued course of history, which is over now, and that is where Saul comes in; he is the expression of the condition of man, who is an open enemy to the very last possible expression of God.

And that is why he calls himself the chief of sinners?

No doubt. Well then, persecution arose and God allowed it. And Philip's service in Samaria follows. Then the offer of Simon Magus to buy the power of giving the Holy Ghost. Philip is a beautiful character of promptness and readiness; he is sent off, when in the full tide of service in Samaria, into the desert; he purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith.

That was the character of his preaching?

Jesus.

How far does that go?

To the eunuch. He explained Isa. 53 The eunuch asks, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man?" and Philip began at that scripture; it goes on even to the glory, for you get "he shall divide the spoil with the strong."

What is "the kingdom of God" in the Acts?

It was the great truth that the kingdom of God was come now, in the form of the kingdom of heaven.

Would preaching the second coming include the kingdom of God?

It brings it in. Preaching the kingdom is not dealing with the world merely, but it was setting up a kingdom.

What is the meaning of "ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come"?

They will not have gone over them until He comes again.

Was Simon's administrative forgiveness when he was baptized?

It was external, and there was nothing real in any part of it; but he had the form of it.

But the judgment of him was not brought out until afterward?

Just so. He let the truth out when he saw the power working, that he thought it would be a fine thing to have that. And the apostle says, Thy money perish with thee, thou hast no part or lot in the matter.

Are the Samaritans here treated as a separate class?

Rather so.

They do not appear to have made the same difficulty about them as they did about the Gentiles?

No, you see the Lord had been in Samaria.

It speaks strongly for the unity that the apostles did not say, They are only Samaritans, let them alone?

In 8:22 he says, " Pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee," what is that?

Possibly he might get forgiven if he bowed to God; it does not exclude him from hope; that is all].

There is something in that word, " his life is taken from the earth;" was it not important at that moment to press that?

That is what he was reading, there was no pressing it more than any other part.

It was going from Jerusalem that this took place?

Yes, he was a proselyte. So now we get Jews, Samaritans, and proselytes, not Gentiles quite. And then we get Saul, the apostle of what brought final judgment on man; by final, I mean, after God had done everything, and Christ was utterly rejected.

And the whole testimony is rejected from the earth?

Yes. And Saul's place is an exceedingly special and peculiar one. Afterward you get Peter receiving the Gentiles.

What marks Paul's place?

He tells us in chapter 26. " 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, delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto;horn. now I send thee." Paul was neither a Jew nor a Gentile, but taken out of both and connected with Christ in the glory. Sovereign grace had taken out this person, guilty as he was of final hostility-hostility to the very end, and in the moment when he was occupied in carrying out this violent hostility of man against God, notwithstanding all that God could do in grace, he is taken out, is identified with God's servants, and sent out in service; " delivering thee from" is really " taking thee out of," so that he was neither a Jew nor a Gentile. He did not even know Christ after the flesh. And you get a new truth at Saul's conversation, in " Why persecutest thou me?" " I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:" that is, all the Christians were Christ Himself, in Christ's estimate of them. As you have " so also is Christ." The whole mystery is involved if not developed in that word " Me."

How do you understand the Lord's appearing to him?

It was because he was to be a witness for Him. Did Paul forget this when he said, " I am a pharisee, the son of a pharisee"?

I suppose so. It is not like his counting it all dross and dung at any rate.

Was Paul right in saying, " Is it lawful to scourge a Roman"?

Well, I do not know that there is any objection there.

And at Philippi?

At Philippi he was right; but his using the plea that he was a Roman sent him to Rome.

Did you mean just now that Paul was put into any other position than that of a believer in Christ?

No; but he was put into the position of a vessel and witness of the truth specially.

In what peculiar sense was he entirely a heavenly man?

Because he was neither a Jew nor a Gentile, and so totally different from what went before.

Was he more heavenly than any other christian man?

Practically he was; but not as to true position. If I receive Paul's testimony, I get into Paul's place. He is a special vessel of testimony; God might have used other instruments as well, and did, and they preached.... by the Holy Ghost.

" Filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," what is that?

Paul had his share, and a special share too, of the afflictions of Christ. Christ had to suffer for His love to the church, and so had Paul.

Paul says that by revelation the mystery was made known unto him, but was it not revealed by the Spirit to the " apostles and prophets"?

I do not doubt others had it revealed. But the first time Paul preached, he preached that Jests was the Son of God; now Peter never preached that once, so far as we get in scripture.

Did the other apostles get their knowledge of the mystery from Paul?

I do not know. Peter knew Paul's writings, and thought some of them hard to be understood. In Galatians " privately" is what Paul communicated to them when alone. We get great truths shown out in him, and this remarkably, that sovereign grace takes him up when in the extreme of hostility against Christ, and makes him the instrument of declaring sovereign grace to those who were in that condition themselves His opposition was a terrible thin 0.; conscience told him he ought to do it, and all the religious authorities told him too; and then he found that he was fighting against the Lord of glory. He found out that all that was right in him (in one sense it was right) had just set him to destroy Christ. It was a complete smash-an utter smash-not of a wicked man at all, but a smash of a man in his most cultivated capacity; and the man was gone too. It was sovereign grace entirely above everything.

It seems to have always characterized Paul's ministry-this revelation of the mystery?

Yes Then as soon as Paul is called,

we get back to Peter, with not only the power still going on, but all Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord, and then, though Paul is called the apostle of the Gentiles, Peter is used to bring in the first Gentile.

Why was that?

Because it must all be brought in in unity; if Paul had started apart, then it would have been a Gentile church, as well as a Jewish church, and that would not do at all.

Peter was naturally averse to going to the Gentiles?

Yes. You do not get unity at first, but blessing for Gentiles in itself.

Is this Peter's having the "keys"?

Yes.

And the Holy Ghost is given them too?

After the testimony of a crucified Christ and faith in Him You must get blood before you get oil, and the oil may come immediately after the blood, as in the case of the leper. When I am cleansed by the blood of Christ, then the Holy Ghost can come and dwell in me.

When you come to understand and know the condition of man, you will find there are no promises belonging to him, any more than righteousness. Wherever you have promises, you will find man in some measure owned. There are no promises to man as man, at least Gentiles have none. That is what I see in the Syrophenician woman, and in what she was brought to own. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." She acknowledges that is true, but "the dogs eat the crumbs," she says-takes the dog's place, and looks to God's sovereign love to send to those who have no title, and then gets everything she wanted; but as long as she talked about the "Son of David," she got nothing.

What is "the Holy Ghost fell on all"?

Peter says it is the same thing happened to them-the Gentiles-as did to us at the beginning.

In chapter 8:16, it says, "for as yet he was fallen upon none of them"?

That is the Samaritans. And now you have Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles, all made partakers of the Holy Ghost.

Just a word again about the water, and blood, and oil: do you put the washing with water as the new birth?

Yes; then the sprinkling with blood, the remission of sins.

And an interval between that and the oil? There often is.

And an interval between water and blood?

Well, there may be, but not in a general way so much, at least, where Christ is preached. And here the oil is at once: "they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." Cornelius was a converted man, and now he is more than that, he is "saved" by Peter's word, and the Holy Ghost fell on him.

Was he not a Christian until then?

A person is not entitled to be called a Christian until he has the third thing; "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not of him."

If we have no promises, what is meant by "all the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus"? And Peter speaks of-"whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious

promises"?

That is the second Man, " yea and amen in Christ Jesus." And Christians have promises of course. But not the first man-not Gentiles, I said.

What is the meaning of the place being shaken? It showed the power in an outward way.

There is no mention of the Holy Ghost in the case of the Ethiopian?

No; but he went on his way rejoicing; and to this day the Abyssinians are half Jews and half Christians.

What of Cornelius himself?

His alms, it says, came up before God, and his prayers; and he was a devout man. He may have heard of Christ, for this thing was not done in a scorner; any way he must have known of Christ, much or little, but he did not know the gospel, as we call it. It is important to see on this question to notice that the word " saved" has a force which is not generally given to it. Take the word " delivered," and then Israel was not delivered until they had passed the Red Sea, they knew they were to be, but were not really.

Would you call it a transition state?

You may call it so, or what you please, but they were not saved. Only remember, I do not go and preach about a transition state to a mass of supposed unbelievers Strictly, salvation is not believed in. Conversion is. Quickening is. But that a person is taken out of the state he is in naturally, in bondage in the flesh, and delivered from it, is not. And that is " saved."

Then what is the difference between conversion and salvation?

Conversion is when a man turns to God, through the Spirit of God working in Him.

What is conviction? Is that there?

It would include that, and be conversion too, if the will is bowed. But salvation is positive deliverance from the state the man is in. The prodigal son was converted when he turned and came to his father; but he had not Christ on him until he had the best robe. He would be glad before if he could but get a corner in the house.

In chapter 11 you get the gospel preached first to the Jews, and then some spoke to the Gentiles. Then Barnabas gets hold of Paul, and that is where the new ministry comes in. The church at Antioch is started.

" As far as Antioch," the distance did not hinder them.

Were Grecians Gentiles?

Hellenes were, but Hellenists were not. Here the whole point is that they were Gentiles.

You have faith there before conversion, they " believed and turned to the Lord"?

Yes, you always get belief first in that way. If they did not believe, they could not turn to Him. Then we get persecution and other things. The Lord delivers Peter out of the prison, but Herod cuts off

James' head. The first persecution was by the chief priests, but this is a royal persecution. In the dealing with Herod we get the government of God outside the church. This is the end of Peter.

In chapter 13 we start from Antioch. There you get the public testimony with this important element, that they are sent forth by the Holy Ghost. Christ had called Paul, but now you get the immediate action of the Spirit for carrying out his ministry.

Would "ministering to the Lord" be worship?

Partly so, I suppose; partly worshipping and partly praying, they were together before the Lord. It would be like Israel, they kept the charge of the Lord until the cloud was taken up, or came down.

Is there anything special in Saul's name being changed?

Well, I believe he had got among the Gentiles, and Paul is a Latin name

In chapter 13:47 Paul takes Isa. 49:6 for a command; it is really a prophecy spoken for the Lord.

In chapter 14. "elders" are chosen, and this is the first intimation of that arrangement.

Is it "ordain?"

The word really means choose, but in ecclesiastical Greek, to ordain. Calvin put in the words, "by the advice of the assembly." In chapter 1 the translators put in "ordain," simply from their own views. The etymological meaning of the word, "by show of hands," is quite lost.

What about these elders now?

Well, if you want them, you must first get me the church, and then apostles too. In chapter x x. Paul speaks of "the flock of God, over whom the Holy Ghost has made you overseers." If you were to choose elders amongst you now, you would be just a little sect with its own voluntary arrangements. Christ was the source of authority: he appointed apostles, apostles appointed elders. Authority came down, never went up. There is no kind of choosing by the church in that way in scripture. There is scripture for subjection to those who labor in the word, and so on; that is on moral ground. In Hebrews and Thessalonians you have, esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

But to appoint them needed either an apostle or an apostle's delegate?

Yes.

How do you understand that "from themselves" grievous wolves should arise?

I do not confine that to the elders, though such might come even from them.

In chapter 15 we get the question of what was to be done with the Gentiles-were they to be circumcised?

Antioch and Jerusalem were tending towards a split; now, if Paul had settled it, each would have gone on its own way, and we should have had two churches. God hindered that and made Jerusalem set the Gentiles free; so keeping up the unity practically. Then, as they went through the cities, they delivered the decrees to them for to keep.

There is one verse that I should like to get at the bottom of, and that is, " it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." What is the force of that?

I do not know that it is not Cornelius there.

Was it that in the assembly the Holy Ghost spoke?

In verse 25 the Holy Ghost is not mentioned; and in verse 23 you have apostles, elders, and brethren. They were decrees of the apostles and elders... You see the Holy Ghost had let in a Gentile without making him a Jew... I see one very wise thing; the apostles let all the brethren tire themselves with discussing, and then they (the apostles) come in lively. James quotes a passage, the scope of which has nothing to say to the matter -one that is in the Septuagint-" that the residue of men might seek after the Lord," but which in the Hebrew is, " that they may possess the remnant of Edom."

What is it quoted for?

For one single word, "the Gentiles, on whom my name is called;" that is all that he quoted it for.

What is the principle of a decree of the council?

Merely that there were certain things they would do right to attend to. There were three things-the proper claims of God; the relationship of man and wife, purity in man; and then, that life belonged to God.

Jews in every city?

Yes, that there are plenty everywhere to plead for Moses. But spiritual intelligence will take up the defense of blood. It is not law only, but before it.

Are these binding upon us now?

Not in the shape of a decree now; but it is clear enough as to two of them. As to things offered to idols, if a thing were sold in the shambles I should ask no questions about it.

Paul's higher truth could not abrogate this?

No, certainly not. And as to fornication, in Thessalonians Paul presses the same thing; but it was ingrained in their habits, they were so degraded. Then we get Barnabas and Paul disputing. I do not doubt, after all, God's hand was in it, because Paul had to stand alone in the place he takes up. Barnabas takes Mark. John Mark, was sister's son to Barnabas, and so he was not above connection with nature as Paul was; that was the secret and therefore he would not be a suitable person to be with Paul.

I suppose it is distinct that the Holy Ghost was with Paul?

Yes; but he may have lost his temper about it. It is beautiful to see how, afterward, he says (2 Tim. 4:11), " Take Mark, and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry."

The brethren recommend Paul to the grace of God?

Yes. He is ordained twice; here, and in chapter 14:26, we read what it meant, " Whence they had been recommended to the grace of God." It was laymen ordaining an apostle, if you take it as ordaining, and done twice over. It is very simple if you really take it as stated; they had what we should call a prayer-meeting about it and that might be done a dozen times.

Would there be any danger in doing it again now?

No; doing it honestly..

What of laying on of hands?

Laying on of hands was always used as a sign of blessing.

In chapter 16 we come to an important principle for evangelists, and that is, that while they are called to preach the gospel to every creature, there is Christ's authority too for being here or there, as He sees fit; while their commission is universal, their direction is particular. Paul was not to go into Asia or Bithynia then (though he was allowed to go into Asia afterward); but he is directed by a dream, and then says, "assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us." When he comes to Macedonia with Luke, then we get "we" for the first time. And we get the wisdom of God needed to defeat Satan. You see how subtle Satan is; if Paul had accepted this woman's testimony, this Pythoness, he would have accepted the devil; and if he put the spirit out of the Pythoness, then he raised the devil against him. And he does nothing for some time, and then he is stirred in spirit, and cannot help himself. Another thing: though he was very glad to preach in the synagogue, when he comes to Philippi, he goes and sits down by the river side with a number of poor women, and that is the commencement of one of the brightest churches we have in scripture. He does not put out any handbills or such things. He goes to the Jewesses. Lydia was a proselyte. And this was the commencement of the work in Europe.

Why did not Paul cast the evil spirit out at once?

Well, it is evident he avoided meddling with it for many days; at last he cannot stand the pretended co-operation of Satan, and then he arouses, and casts it out.

Will Satan co-operate now-a-days?

To be sure he will, if you will let him.

Not in the same manifest way?

Manifest! how so, how manifest then, except to the spiritual perception of the apostle? Many an infidel would come and work with you now, in some respects, if you would let him. It teaches us how important it is to see what we accept in the way of help in God's service.

In chapter 17 it is all Paul's ministry. And then you get him at Athens. Then you have Paul's defense, not sermon, from verse 22. He had preached (ver. 18) Jesus and the resurrection.

He preached repentance, and that characterized his gospel preaching?

Only you must not call this preaching. Paul is here brought to Areopagus to answer for himself.

A Letter on Atonement

Beloved Brother-In John 14:9, the Son presents Himself as the display of the Father. Fundamental truth! which every believer receives and rejoices in. Without doubt he who rejects it denies the glory of Him who came to effect atonement, and undermines the atonement itself. It is the dignity of the person which gave divine capacity for the work, and infinite efficacy to the work when accomplished.

But atonement demanded far more than either the divine rights of the Lord, or the sinner's appropriation of Him and His work by faith apart from works. Hence reasoning from the words of the Lord, which do not touch the question, can only mislead. What does Scripture say of the atonement? Does it not make it depend on the cross of Christ? On His blood shed for the remission of our sins? On His suffering once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God? Here is an ample array of clear New Testament testimonies: Rom. 3:25; 4:25; 5:9, 10; 1 Cor. 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:4; 3:16; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; 4:32; 5:2; Col. 1:14, 20; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; Heb. 1:3; 2:9, 14; 9:12, 14, 15, 24-28; 10:5-10, 12-19; 12:24; 13:12, 20; 1 Peter 1:2, 18-21; 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Rev. 1:5; 5:9; 7:14, etc. Need one add the anticipatory words in the Gospels, Matt. 20:28; 26:28; John 1:29, or other such scriptures?

Yet it may be well to notice briefly a few indisputable types in the Old Testament. The blood of the slain lamb on the paschal night was sprinkled without, not within; on the lintel and door-posts, not for Israel to see, but for God. "When I see the blood, I will pass over." So in the sacrifices the blood was put on the horns of God's altar, presented to God, never to man. In certain cases men (lepers, priests, etc.) were sprinkled with blood that they might be cleansed, that is, judicially clean before God. Thus on the greatest of all occasions it was carried in, and put before the mercy-seat, on atonement-day; but it only the more establishes the principle, that it was for man before God, and not a mere token of God's love to man. In the New Testament application Christ is declared to have entered in by His own blood. To have come down and died in love to man is equally true, but quite distinct.

There is no doubt, then, of love in God more than in Christ; Scripture is explicit. The Father sent the Son; God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten. But it is equally true that the Son of Man must be lifted up; and that necessity was not merely man's evil, but God's word and righteous character and holy nature and majesty which must be vindicated in order to a righteous forgiveness. The cross of Christ meets all this, and much more. He was forsaken of God because of sin (Psa. 22) It was no question here of the Jews or Gentiles, of Herod or Pontius Pilate, save as guilty persecutors. God too was at the cross, and made Christ sin for us, that we might become His righteousness in Christ. He had suffered for righteousness and holiness and grace before. He suffered for sins then. This is atonement, the sole ground of expiating the guilt of the believer. Nor was this a novel expectation, though a new fact. He was wounded for our transgressions, said the prince of prophets; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. Jehovah hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. "For the

transgression of my people was he stricken." "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him: he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed," etc. He shall bear their iniquities. He bare the sin of many.

Thus law, psalms, and prophets agree; Old and New Testaments alike proclaim Christ's suffering from God, and before God, because of our sins. The Lord announced it; the apostles-Paul especially-are full of it; and not least the beloved disciple, who most presses God's love which is really enhanced by it, of which the depth and strength are only there known where Christ's drinking this cup from the Father is owned. Divine love is not all the truth, nor man's hatred, nor Satan's power; but deeper than all is Christ's offering Himself to God as a sacrifice for sins. Love indeed is enfeebled incalculably by not seeing the truth that Christ bore the judgment of our sins at God's hand. Rather is love degraded into indifference to man's sins, and disregard of God's holiness and majesty, and of such warnings as are in Deut. 27:26; Rom. 2:9; Heb. 10:31. The scriptures cited prove, on the contrary, that expiation was essential for God's honor if He would save guilty man, even though he believed. Judgment was born by Christ that grace might flow out to the sinner. It is therefore now God's righteousness as well as His grace.

When it is argued, then, that all theology is false which makes the image of the Son different from that of the Father, is it denied that God bruised Christ, and that Christ was forsaken by God? that Christ died in expiation of our guilt before God, who raised Him from the dead? If so, this is abusing one truth to contradict another no less momentous. Justification is by faith, not works; but did Christ accomplish the work typified by the sacrifices for sin on atonement-day? Isa. 53 predicts, and Matthew and Mark record, our Lord's suffering, as He says, by God's abandonment of Him, the bitterest of all punishment for our sins. Is God's punishing, and Christ's enduring, the same image? I should have thought them the greatest contrast; yet the counsel of peace was between Them both. What has been used, therefore, is only a misuse of John 14:9, which in truth regards Christ's person and not His work. To apply it to the cross, so as to get rid of the Lord's suffering from God for our sins, is really to explain away the Scripture truth and Christian foundation of atonement. If this be not the meaning of the argument, what is?

Further, it is assumed that righteousness in God must be the same thing as in Jesus, and that the assertion of a good quality in the Father, which the Son lacks, in effect denies that the latter is God, or like Him. But this is quite a mistake. Righteousness is, as always, consistency with the relationship in which each stands. Evidently, therefore, as among men it is modified in the servant as compared with the master, in the child with the parent, in the wife with the husband, in the subject with the sovereign, so it is with Him who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondsman's form, become in the likeness of men, and found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even death of the cross: wherefore also God exalted Him exceedingly. As man therefore the Son, far from lacking what is the Father's morally, has what the Father has not and could not have, as He never became incarnate. The righteousness which directs or commands is one thing, that which obeys is another. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." It was His act; yet was it obedience of His Father (John 10:17, 18). The mystery of His person finds its answer in His death. To reason from one aspect of it exclusively, whether divine or human, is to divide the person, to neutralize the work, and to lose the truth. "No one knoweth the Son but the Father." We must be subject to His word,

but to it all, and not to a part only. Jesus is the Son, who is not like God merely (Scripture never saying so), for He really is God, and as fully God as are the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Moreover all the fullness which was pleased to dwell in Him does dwell in Him bodily; yet, while the persons in the Godhead have not only unity of nature but one mind and counsel and purpose, so they act distinctly in manifesting it, as we see, e.g., in Matt. 3:16, 17, for they are three as well as one. And though Jesus were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. There could not but be therefore qualities, perfect in their kind, in Him which were not in the Father, nor in Him (the Son) till He took the place of servant as man on earth. Still more is this true of Him on the cross, where He entered on a new work, unique in its character, and infinite in its consequences of grace and glory everlasting, as the sufferings in which it was wrought. This in no way compromises the Godhead of Christ, any more than it impeaches His manifestation of the Father or expression of God. And the refusal to see distinctness of action in the Father and the Son throughout His course on earth, and, above all, in the cross, tends not indeed to Romanism, but to what is yet worse-Sabellianism, and thus far more at issue with holy Scripture than with the doctrine of Anselm, which is to me of little or no account.

We must not with the theologians confound purchase with redemption. All the world, all mankind, even the wicked, are bought by Christ's blood; but none save believers have redemption (ciTroXL7pcoov) through His blood, the forgiveness of sins though the ciffiXurpoy be lap' veurcov. Purchase makes all to be His property or slaves; by redemption we are freed from Satan, Christ's freedmen, to serve God in liberty. Is it seriously questioned by the figure of the King dying in victory for His army, that the blood of Christ shed as a sacrifice for sin was not presented to God as well as for man? It is in vain to reason on God's loving the world, and so loving it as to send His Son to give the believer eternal life; but this is distinct from the other truth, that He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Now sacrifice in Scripture is to God, and never to the creature, which is heathenism, as the negation of sacrifice is infidelity. And assuredly the work of redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is by blood, by suffering atoningly on the cross, not by all authority in heaven and earth conferred on the Risen Man by God. And it is important to see that when all is made subject by Christ, and He hands back the kingdom, it is that not the Father but God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) should be all in all.

Yours ever in Christ,

Canaan and the Armor of God: a Lecture

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast plate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 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, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Eph. 6:10-20.)

IT might seem strange at first sight that in this epistle, where there is the fullest unfoldings of the privileges of the children of God, conflict should be brought out; but we are often not aware of the character of the conflict from not knowing our privileges. Here it is found we are specially in conflict, and in a conflict that is neither known nor got into until we realize the privileges which this epistle specially unfolds.

In Galatians there is conflict, but it's a conflict between flesh and Spirit-the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; but in Ephesians it is not flesh, but spiritual wickedness in high places. We have to overcome flesh, and there is a very close connection between these two conflicts, still they are distinct.

In Ephesians, it is a new creation; Christ has ascended up on high, "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." So completely has He taken us out of the power of Satan that He can make us the vessels of His service. He has taken us out of the world, and then sent us into it, and if we thus stand associated with Christ, (which is the the privilege of every Christian, though all do not realize it,) we must expect all the conflict associated with the place into which we are brought. In proportion as we realize that we are the vessels of heavenly service, we get this special character of conflict.

You cannot cross Jordan without finding the Canaanite and the Perizzite in the land. There are the trials and perils of the wilderness, which test our hearts,-all know more or less of the weary way testing our hearts and discovering what is in them, but wilderness experience is not the same as conflict in the land. When Joshua got into the place of the privileges of the people of God, he was in the place of conflict. God has set Christ as a Man in the glory, because He (as a Man) has perfectly glorified God as to sin. Christ has not only died for our sins, but we have died with Him, (dead with Christ is what Jordan is,) and we are raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; thus associated, dead and risen, with Him, we are brought into the place

where all the conflict is. It is most valuable and precious to get distinctly hold of this; many a Christian has not realized it; there is many a one still in Egypt, holding the value of the blood on the door-posts, but knowing nothing of the deliverance accomplished at the Red Sea. Israel had to stand still and see the salvation of God; this answers to the death and resurrection of Christ. I am out of Egypt: the judgment which fell on the Egyptians has saved me. God has raised up Christ and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. Just as every poor sinner has been driven out of the earthly paradise because sin is complete in the first Adam, so am I taken out of this world into the heavenly paradise in the Second Adam because righteousness is complete. God raising up Christ and giving Him glory proves that the question of sin has been all settled in Christ on the cross, and in virtue of this, He is sitting where He is, at the right hand of God. The passage through the wilderness is to humble and prove us; our perseverance is tested by God, leading us through the path in which Christ was found implicitly faithful. Israel went through that great and terrible wilderness where were the fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water. God brought them water out of the rock of flint, fed them with the manna to humble them and prove them, to do them good at their latter end. They came to Jordan, they pass it, they get into the land, they eat the old corn, and the land is theirs.

In the wilderness and Canaan we get two characters of Christian experience,-one, the life down here; the other, the position in the heavenlies. We are not only a testimony to the world, but also to principalities and powers in the heavenlies.-" To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God." He " hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places; " but though that is all true as to title, as to fact, the Canaanite and the Perizzite are still in the land to dispute the possession. We have our place in the power of the Spirit of God. Christ having gone before, our place is sure to faith; but the Canaanite is not yet destroyed-Christ's enemies are not yet put under His feet, so conflict characterizes the place of the Lord's redeemed people. When Joshua got into the land, he met a man with a drawn sword. Fighting was to characterize their possession of the land, and when Joshua asks, " Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? " the answer was, "Nay, but as Captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." They were the redeemed of the Lord -the LORD'S host,-so completely the Lord's, that He uses them as His servants in conflict to subdue His enemies.

They must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and they cannot fight the Lord's battles if the flesh is at work. With an Achan in the camp there can be no victory, and therefore we must be practically dead to fight successfully; not merely reckoning ourselves dead, but be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body.

Paul, as a servant, always carried with him the sense of this, not as a title merely, but "Paul" was kept completely down, always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus; nothing of Paul appeared, it was Jesus only. As soon as they crossed the Jordan (Jordan is death and resurrection with Christ), they were circumcised-death is practically applied; and in like manner after they had crossed the Red Sea they had to drink of the bitter water-really the salt water; they had been saved by it, they must now drink it. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit."

As soon as we get in heavenly places we get the " old corn "-we find Christ there, we feed on Him; but we have to be circumcised, practically putting off the body of the flesh. Israel got into the land, and had to be circumcised;-their title they knew, but they had not taken the ground of being practically dead and risen (from Egypt). If a man is practically dead and risen, what has he to do with this world? A man dead, and thus taken out of the world, has to go through the world and live in it again if God so wills it. We have to run across the wilderness to glory. As one associated with the Lord, I am the witness and testimony to the world of what a heavenly Christ is. I am to be a follower of God, an imitator of God. I shall be seeking other souls to enjoy it with me. If we are endeavoring to serve the Lord, shall we not find hindrances? if seeking to maintain the Lord's people in the place of fidelity to all this, do you think Satan will let you alone? There will be the wiles of Satan to get saints into his power, and we have to withstand his stratagems, even more than his power.

Infidelity, superstition in its various forms, are opposed to us, consequently we need the whole armor of God the moment we come in. We shall not get through in our own strength, we need the strength of the Lord and the power of His might; we need the whole armor, not one piece must be wanting; the armor must be of God; human armor will not ward off the attacks of Satan; confidence in that, armor will engage us in the combat to make us fall before an enemy stronger and more crafty than we. Let us see what this complete armor is.

"Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth." This is the first thing, looking at what we call the subjective part. Our state comes first, and there is no divine activity until the heart is perfectly in order. The loins are the seat of strength when duly girt, but represent the intimate affections and movements of the heart. The figure is taken from the habits of the country where these instructions were given; they wore long garments, which hindered their working unless girded up. We get the expression in Job 38:3,-" Gird up now thy loins like a man "-that is, to see what he had to say to God. It is the power of truth applied to everything that takes place in the heart; it is not doctrine, but truth practically applied. The Lord said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy Word is truth." God has sent into the midst of the world all that can judge man according to what God is. Christ is the center of the Word; He was the light of the world; He revealed the thoughts of many hearts. He was here as a man, and revealed what God was, and the world was judged by it. He comes and brings all that is divine and heavenly in a man (Christ) in direct contact with all that is contrary to God in this world. Satan, as the god of this world, led man against Christ. Some fancy that he has ceased to be the god and prince of this world; but though the cross broke his title, it was not until the cross (where man openly ranged himself, under Satan, against God) that he became its prince. Truth came into the world-Christ Himself, the truth. The truth of God brought right to men's hearts discovers their thoughts and intents. Now, when I get this Word effectually applied to me, I get the girdle of truth.

When all that God has said in His Word, and the unseen realities He reveals, have their true force and application to my heart, my loins are girt, my garments are not dragging in the mire of this world, my thoughts are not wandering, and the condition of my heart is, so to speak, tucked up ready for service, whatever that may be. We do not get into this conflict until we get into this place. We get the conflict of the old man, but that is Egypt. In order to get the victory over Satan, and carry on the Lord's battles, I must realize my position according to the truth, just as Israel overcame by realizing the promises of God.

First thing of all, my heart must be completely tested and subjected to a heavenly word. The Lord said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven." Christ brings this heavenly truth before us and says, Does what is in your heart correspond with this? When this Word becomes a positive delight to us, we get the taste and appreciation of heavenly things-the things that are lovely and of good report-which He has brought to us. I get on the one hand judgment of all flesh in me, and on the other the blessedness of what Christ is. Wherever the loins are girt about with truth, there will be confidence of heart, and the soul will be steadfast, there will be no turning back in the conflict to judge ourselves, our souls, so to speak, will be naturally with God, there will be occupation of heart with Christ, and there will be the Holy Ghost taking of the things which are Christ's and showing them to us.

The result of this girding of the loins is, that a man's condition is the effect of truth. It was Christ's condition; He was the truth, and my condition will be like Christ's in proportion as the truth is in effect on my heart,-the affections and heart right, I pass through the world in spirit with Him. "Stand, therefore; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness." All this, mark, is practical righteousness with God; we do not want armor with God, we want it against Satan.

If I am an inconsistent man, going to serve God without the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left-without practical godliness, Satan will be sure to bring it up. In preaching, for instance, if your walk is not consistent, the world will say you are no better than they, and Satan will then have power against you. If you are walking according to Christ because your heart is according to Christ, you have the breastplate of righteousness; but unless a man has a good conscience, he will be a coward, and afraid of being detected. With a good conscience, we can go on boldly; the condition of the soul where Christ is revealed is truth, and the walk of 'the man is all right-there is nothing for Satan to lay hold of. The loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, I have then to see that my feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. I pass through the world with my feet shod. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." In this path there is no selfishness; selfishness is for maintaining its rights, by it that is not having my feet shod with peace. Self is subdued if I am following Christ. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." Learning of Christ, he carries peace with him, the soul is at peace with God, the conscience at rest, his feet are shod with peace, and he carries through the world the spirit and character of Christ.

He has on the breastplate of righteousness. What was the path of the blessed Lord? There was nothing in question as to His state. He went untouched with all that man could bring against Him; His feet were shod. So with him who follows Christ; he can bring out the spirit and character of Christ wherever he goes. It may raise hatred, as it did with Christ; His perfect love brought out the hatred of man; but a subdued, godly, upright man will be a peaceful man in passing through the world, and although man may not speak peaceably to him, as much as lieth in him, he is to live peaceably with all men. Thus we get it in both. aspects,-the path is characterized by the spirit of grace and peace, and there is righteousness and truth. The state of the heart first right, loins girt with truth, righteousness for a breastplate, and feet shod with peace, the soul subjectively right, I can then take up the shield of faith. Subjectively right, I have not to think of myself. A man walking with nothing on his conscience is free; if not walking right, he will be occupied with himself. The mere existence of an evil nature does not suppose a had conscience, but yielding to it does. We

are not told to confess sin, but sins; it is easy to confess sin-easy to say, "I am a poor sinful creature," but that generally is to excuse sins. I have failed to keep the flesh down. Of course I can never say I have no sin, but if I am not bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus,

practically dead, the flesh will surely play me false. We want these three first elements of the armor, and then we have not to think about ourselves. Practically in the light, as He is in the light, the heart right, I then get the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. This shield supposes I can look up with entire blessed confidence in God. " He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; He shall cover thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be Thy shield and buckler; thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

God is above Satan. Satan may shoot his arrows, but they cannot break through the shield of faith. In Christ, the victory has been won in man and for man. Satan did his worst against Christ, first, to seduce and afterward to deter Him, but he was completely overcome. All the power of Satan is broken and gone. Christ has gone through death and annulled him who has the power of death. Christ has not only put away our sins, but as a man standing for us, He has completely overcome the devil. We are not told to overcome, but to "resist " the devil, and he will flee from us. If resisted, he meets Christ in us and runs away. Human nature cannot resist, it will acquiesce. It is not a question of power on our part, but of simple faithfulness and looking to Christ; it is not that we are strong, but strength is made perfect in weakness. What was ever so weak as Christ-Christ crucified through weakness? but then the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men. Nothing could be more weak and foolish in man's eyes than the cross, but we know, nevertheless, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Whenever we are content to own ourselves weak, there is the strength that enables us to overcome. Satan is very subtle. If Satan deals with man (apart from God), it is all over with him. How is it possible that wise and learned men of this world give way to such follies as ritualism and the like? Satan, more clever than they, is behind it all, and laughs to see them trusting their own wisdom. The simple soul that has his heart right cannot go wrong. Satan has no kind of power while the soul is walking in obedience, that is the secret of it all. If walking inconsistently, the shield of faith will be down, and I shall be open to all the fiery darts. There should be that blessed confidence in God which reckons on Christ having completely overcome the world and the devil, and that all the power of evil now in the world will soon be put down. We are to be exercised in the conflict; the Lord has said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

We have as yet no activities brought out, -so far, it is defensive. The defensive armor comes first. We are slow to understand this, and we often get into activities when we ought to be quiet. The shield is defensive. Satan is active. The Lord may bless and help us, in His grace, but there is many a one got into activities without knowing themselves. The helmet of salvation is still defensive; we have the conscious, blessed, and full certainty of being in heavenly places in Christ-the soul walking in the full confidence that I have Christ there, who has delivered me out of the power of the devil. Christ has fought my battle and overcome. I can hold my head up, because I have got salvation. The blessed certainty that I am in Christ and Christ is for me is my helmet. I can now be active. Having judged the flesh, godly in walk, peaceful in my path through the world, with confidence in God, and salvation assured, I can take up the sword of the Spirit,-I can fight,

sheltered in the inner man, and shielded from all attacks from without. I take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We do not always look to see that it is so-that there's nothing between God and our souls, so that He is practically with us in the conflict. Are we walking in the practical sense of God being with us? If there is an Achan in the camp, as there was with Israel, God will not go up. It is of all-importance we should be clear as to this. Paul kept under his body, and brought it into subjection. If we are to be active in the service of the Lord, we must go out from the presence of the Lord according to what His presence gives. Paul said, " Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men." Always self-judgment, always keeping close to God, and then you can go out in service to others; not always, perhaps, in public ministry, but in the path of every-day life.

You will have the secret of the Lord with you, the consciousness of God with you, clearness of judgment, and not distracted or dismayed by half a dozen thoughts. You have the secret of the Lord; going on quietly, it may be, but going on with God. Then comes, no matter how active I may be, the inward preparation,-" praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." We have had the inward affections and the sword of the Spirit, but now it is entire dependence-the Word of God and prayer. These two things are found running together through Scripture: the Word of God and prayer. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word. The Lord said, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." In the next verses, the Lord teaches His disciples to pray. When the apostles chose deacons, the reason assigned is, that they might give themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. When there is to be service carried on against the wiles of the devil, half the battle is to be fought out in God's presence beforehand in prayer. When the prince of this world came to the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, he found Him agonizing in prayer. Peter slept while the Lord prayed: the result was, that Peter denied Him, but the blessed Lord witnessed a good confession.

Nothing can, nor ever will, take the place of that earnestness in prayer: if we are to have God with us, we must pray. It is marked by perfect calmness. If we have God with us, we must be with God, who is sovereign in love and goodness, and has associated us with His own interests. Does not my heart yearn after the conversion of poor sinners? do I not pray that hearts may know more of Christ? that saints may walk more faithfully? God desires this, and He has given us a path in the world associated with His interests. There is to be perseverance and supplication for all saints. If I see a soul in danger of going astray, I go with all perseverance and supplication to God about him: my heart is in it.

The very same word used of the Lord in Gethsemane is used of Epaphras, who labored fervently in prayer. It is conflict of heart. He craves the blessing of God with all his heart-craving for it earnestly, and entering into it because it is in the interests of God in the world. This has to be carried on in opposition to Satan, who will bring all his craft and power against us. We have consequently to be with God. What a blessed thing to know that I get power and wisdom from God, grace and wisdom in practice! If I use a sword, I must get wisdom for it. What a place of blessing it would be if we were all practically with God For our own souls it is so helpful, because prayer is the expression of entire dependence, but at the same time, confidence in God. A person like Paul, in weakness and trembling, fightings without and fears within, going about getting victories! He says to the Corinthians, "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much

trembling." It is always good to be conscious of weakness provided there is faith in God. Constant dependence is the constant expression of faith in God; the soul goes to God with God's affairs; we realize how much they are our own. The blessed Lord has gone down into the dust of death. Satan's power was exercised to the fullest, but it was all broken. He comes up again and sits at the right hand of God, takes His people, whom He has completely delivered from the hand of Satan, and uses them for conflict against him-the instruments of His service in the world. A wondrously blessed place if we only knew how to hold it,-blessed to be made the Lord's host against Satan. The more you are in the forefront of the battle, the more you will be exposed to the fiery darts. The more you bear testimony to God's thoughts, God's mind, the place the saints have in God's mind, the more you will be the object of Satan's attacks. You will necessarily be exposed to more snares and dangers than those who lag behind, and there is no place where dependence is more needed and felt.

There is more strength provided for those in the forefront to bear witness to Christ's title against Satan, and Satan will never let it pass without opposition. When I have all the armor on, and come to wield the sword, I am not to be thinking of the armor, but of God and His purposes, " watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Oh how little we know of this! Supposing we pass through a day, was all that happened turned into prayer? If I am walking maintaining Christ's cause, it all turns to prayer. It is a wondrous test of the state of our souls. Do you find you can intercede much for others? Do you find earnestness in intercession for all saints? Is my heart so in the interests of Christ that I can have a lasting and continual interest for others? If my heart is in a bad state, and the presence of God is revealed to me, I think of myself-I am not free to intercede for others. "And for me also," says the apostle, " that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly,... as I ought to speak." How is it with us, beloved friends? It is an amazing blessing to be doing this, but we cannot if our own souls are not right-if I am not in the presence of God. As far only as I keep on this armor, I am useful: all is founded on being in a settled place before God. The blood on the door-post, the Red Sea crossed, Jordan passed, circumcised, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away, -then comes conflict in the land: all is founded on redemption.

Be assured we shall meet the wiles of Satan. Our own state and conscience are easily detected if our hearts are simple in the truth. It is not that we are to be learning Satan's wiles, but if our hearts are simple, we shall be more than a match for him. Satan is a good deal cleverer than we are, and wherever redemption is not fully known, there Satan plays his tricks. The moment that redemption is really believed in, all the systems of superstition, so prevalent in the world, are gone. You may have old things lingering, but you will never find a person under the power of superstition who has the consciousness in himself that Christ has died and suffered for him. We see wise and learned men going away to ritualism, and the devil behind it all, but the moment redemption is really known, the devil's power is gone. The system of ritualism proceeds on the footing that Christ can have to say to man in the flesh that he is not lost and dead in his sins, and consequently a complete and accomplished redemption is denied. The moment I have my soul established in Christ, this snare of the devil will not prevail. A man may know the truth of the incarnation, and may speak more beautifully of the person of the Lord than even Christians, but all the time ignorant of redemption. I have the witness of Christ in me; I know Christ. They may try to persuade me that Christ is such and such, but I know Him; I have got Him; He is dwelling in my heart, so that I am

not to be turned by such follies as ritualism and the like. The Lord keep us in a constant sense of dependence, in a sense of what He is, dependent on Him every moment, that we may never get out of the presence of God, for when we are out of His presence there is danger.

Colossians 1

WHAT characterizes this epistle, is, that we are looked at as risen-dead and risen-but not yet seated in heavenly places, it is not the Holy Ghost revealing our place in heaven, but we walking as risen men in the world looking for it.

In different epistles we get various aspects of the Christian. In Ephesians we are seated in the heavenlies; in Romans alive in the world; here we are risen, but not in glory. We get here, more fully than elsewhere, life unfolded, your life is in Christ, in God. Then you should walk according to that. He puts us to run the race.

People get confused by connecting these " if's " with redemption. "Christ in you the hope of glory" -in you, Gentiles-is an entirely new thought, a thing never heard of before; it is that side of the mystery that is revealed here-not Christ come in glory to take up His people, but Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Verse 8 is the one place where " Spirit " is named in this Epistle.

Verse 10. He puts the walk first, not merely avoiding wickedness (a natural man might do that), but filled with the knowledge of His will. Christ left the traces of His path in the wilderness.

In the ordering of Israel, the tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, and they were to march in the same order as they encamped; but when they wanted to find a way through the wilderness, the ark leaving the prescribed place, that was the center, went before them, it was grace.

It is remarkable that there is no direction as to the walk, but filled with the knowledge of His will; are you that?

How often we do not know if we are right, even when we desire it.

Seeing the path through the wilderness tests the state. The vulture's eye hath not seen it. If we are to walk worthy of the Lord, we must be filled with the knowledge of His will. Men ought to read " Christ in you," as distinctly as the ten commandments on the tables of stone.

This is the apostle's comparison, not mine. We shall be perfectly like Christ in glory, and the eye is directed to that now. As though He said, I am going away, and I cannot be glorified in my own Person down here, but I should be in you. You are called to walk worthy of the Lord.

The first thing that struck me when I began to think seriously was, that Christ never did anything for Himself. He ought to govern our hearts, our motives, everything.

He was never weary of doing good-as a Man He sat weary at the well, yet ready to speak to a poor woman. He had come down so low as to be dependent on her for a drink of water. We should walk here, having Christ before the heart, governing us, as the only motive.

He was at all times, and in every case, governed by divine principles-sensible to everything around Him, but never governed by what was around Him; always by what was divine.

We should always be governed by Him.

He was at all times the expression of divine perfectness.

" Christ is all, and in all," not " all in all;" that is never said of Christ, God is all in all.

Our calling is to walk worthy of the Lord: we are in this place, epistles of Christ. I am called to walk through this world to express Christ.

Three ways in which we are told to walk worthy-of " God," of " the Lord," of " the vocation."

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

It is the spiritual state that discerns what is " worthy " of the Lord.

Verse 11. " Strengthened," &c. There is no doing without patience in the difficulties; you would expect it was to do something great-no, to be patient.

There is no will when I am patient. You will find when you fail through the day, it is patience has failed. We get wisdom to shew what the path is, strength to walk in it-not strength to overcome, but strength to endure. " Rejoice in the Lord always." If my will is at work, I am sure to get vexed with something.

We do not read, " Resist the devil, and you will overcome him," but resist, and he will flee from you; he knows he has met Christ, for flesh would not resist him.

Verse 12. Now he comes to what set him in the path. I am fit for heaven, made meet; I cannot look up to God without having the consciousness, I am fit to be there in light. An exercised heart looks at Christ.

The thief was fit to go to heaven; he confessed the Lord when the disciples were afraid to do it. He says, " Lord," and cared for nothing, though he was in agony, but " Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom "-and it is an ugly place to be remembered, as a thief on a gibbet.

The Lord will not remember him only this day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He was fit to go-to be the Lord's companion from the gibbet.

Do you believe that Christ by His work has made you fit? I do not ask if you have accepted it-God has; and you should be only too glad to have it.

He gave His Son in love, and accepted Him in righteousness; and the thing that gives me peace is what God thinks of it.

We are delivered from Satan's power. " Resist him, and he will flee from you." Christ has broken his power-I am delivered from the power of darkness-but that did not content God; He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. We have got a positive place, the kingdom of the Son of His love, not of light, though it is that.

He has many attributes-He is holy, just, righteous; but there are two names given as what He is, "light" and "love," and we get the love as well as the light.

He is not content to say you have light, but you have love too.

Then He speaks of the fullness of the Person of Christ, but I cannot go into it all here.

Verse 16. I get blessed revelations brought close down to me. You must not suppose that we do not know Him because He is not present, for we know Him a great deal better, because we have the Spirit. I am not a stranger before God, for I know Him, and as my Father-if you get that, you get everything.

I have met God, I know what He is; and He is all love to me.

It is the full revelation of God to my soul.

In John 4 had Christ a hard word for the poor woman? Has He one for me? No; He would have given the living water-I have got it-He is all love to me; it makes me feel what a poor creature I am, these blessed revelations.

1 John 4:15. We have the consciousness that He is with us. If I make my abode with the Father and the Son up there, they will make their abode with me down here. One has a consciousness that He is with us-in us. He goes on revealing Himself to us. The time is coming when Christ will take to Him His great power, then I get glory.

His first coming did not bring the world into order: at His second everything will be brought into order, both in earth and heaven.

Look at the earth now-oppression, wars, &c. That was how Christ found the world; and He was a man of sorrows in it.

As to heaven, we read of angels that sinned and were cast out, and we never hear of them again. Do you think Christ, when He comes, will allow such things? Not for a moment.

The thing that should characterize us, is going against the stream. I know God is infinite love, He gave His Son for me, He will reconcile all things; but you bath He reconciled. It is never said God is reconciled to us. God's love was the spring of it all.

I joy in God, instead of hiding myself like Adam. You are brought now to enjoy His love. "Herein is love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."

I cannot realize this wonderful love of God without loving Him.

It is the sense of its mother's love that makes the child obedient. I am reconciled, I am fit to be in the light. There is no "if" in what has gone before; perfect love accomplished all, "by one offering." The word "forever" means uninterruptedly. The "if" never comes in as to redemption, the thief goes straight to heaven.

In the wilderness we are tested-you must set out for Canaan or you will not get there. We have the journey to take where the dangers are, and there we are thrown on the faithfulness of God, to keep us, and that is dependence.

The danger is real, but the care is faithful-it is constant dependence; but He has to keep me, every moment. " No man shall pluck them out of my hand;" but why does He say so, if there is no danger. Satan would like to do it. " Pluck them " (John 10:28) is the same word as " catcheth." (Ver. 12.) The wolf catcheth the sheep.

In 1 Cor. 1:8, after having said, " who shall also confirm you to the end blameless," he begins to blame them for every single thing. They had more gift than grace, these poor Corinthians.

Christ is in heaven because my sins are gone; but when I come to my path, there is not an instant I am not dependent on His faithfulness; every instant of every day, I need to be in dependence on Him, and as to my sins if they are not perfectly put away now, it can never be done. " He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." God had been considering Job, and it is He who directs Satan's attention to Job, but He forces Satan to own that Job was no hypocrite. He withdraweth not His eyes for one instant.

Do you believe, beloved friends, that God sees everything-a constant, unceasing care over us every moment?

It is not a question of my walk, but of the unchanging faithfulness of the living Lord. He never takes His eye off us, and if ours are always on Him, He will guide us with His eye.

" As he is, so are we in this world." I do not see any presumption in believing what God says, though it is most wonderful, blessed too.

Look at Israel, they were going on wretchedly -" a stiff-necked people "-but what do I hear from the mountain-tops? " I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel."

No encouragement, beloved friends, to carelessness. But is it not encouragement to lean on the Beloved?

We are strengthened, but we need it, and have to walk in the sense of our need of it.

The Lord give us, beloved friends, the full blessed consciousness of the full efficacy of the work of Christ.

The Epistle to the Ephesians - Chapter 1

HERE we have the thought of God about us-all that there is of blessing in Him for us. Angels, principalities, and powers, will learn through us the manifold wisdom of God. Then He unfolds it all. First our calling, then God's purpose as to Christ-His place-then our inheritance. The close of chapter 1. puts all these subjects together; all are founded on this title which God takes-the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is only after His resurrection that Christ calls His disciples His brethren.

Verse 3. You get here the double title. It is the secret of all God's thoughts, that His purpose is to put us into the same place as Christ. (1 Cor. 15:49.) We shall be as like the Second Adam as we have been like the first.

In Matt. 16:20, He forbids them to say He was the Christ. In chapter 12 He is rejected; chapter 13, He introduces the kingdom of heaven; chapter 16, the church; chapter 17, the kingdom of glory, but at the end He shows the disciples where He was leading them. He says to Peter, You and I are children, we are therefore free-" for me and thee," think of the Lord of glory saying that! He puts Peter into this place with Himself, Then He shows His power over creation. He puts Peter in association with Himself just when He was showing this divine power.

Eph. 1:3 is altogether in contrast to the Jew. They will be blessed with temporal blessings under Christ, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He has blessed us; that is the first wonderful statement.

Christ's place comes second, not that it is second, but unless we were brought into the place, we could. not understand His place.

Verse 4. We have to go through the world, all of us (speaking generally), but we belonged to heaven before the foundation of the world. " Holy," " love," that is God's nature; we are made partakers of it; that gives capacity for knowing Him. I know not anything of an angel, for I have not his nature; but I am capable of knowing and enjoying God, and that in His own presence.

Verse 4 is what Christ was here-holy, blameless, and always before God in love.

Verse 5. " Children " implies " Father," but it is still in Christ. It does not say in verse 4, according to the good pleasure of His will, for He could not have unholy creatures before Him; but here it is said, for though He might have only desired to have servants, He chooses to have " children." Verse 4. He might have said " accepted in Christ;" that would not do, it is " in the Beloved," accepted according to that.

Q. Is holy in Christ our state now, or our standing?

A. It is put here as it is in God's mind, not as it is found in the poor earthen vessel. The extent of God's grace almost alarms people. Do you believe that God loves you as He does Jesus? If I have glory, it is " the glory which thou gavest me."

Q. Do you think we get this without going through Romans and Colossians?

A. No; but it is of immense moment for us to understand that it is by " grace," and that according to what God is.

The conscience must be reached. God is light and love; and that manifests what we are-exposes us.

He reasons down from what God is-no one is ever free till he gets that side.

Israel, in Egypt, were sheltered from judgment; but it is a different thing at the Red Sea. There they are told to stand still, and see the salvation of God.

I am where God has put me, not where sin has put me.

In John 3 you get the two sides. Then my peace flows from what God is for me. If I go to God now, I go to the One who did not spare His own Son for me. I get all the love that was in His heart, this love reigning through righteousness.

The forgiveness is not according to the measure of my need (though it meets it, of course), but the manner of it is " according to the riches of His grace."

Verses 9 and 10. Then God says, Now that I have brought you into capacity to understand, I will make known to you my purpose about Christ.

There is nothing absolutely certain but faith. I may believe there is such a town as Edinburgh, but it is possible that an earthquake may have destroyed it. Nothing but faith can be absolutely certain.

In Hebrews we read, the "full assurance" of faith. Three " full assurances " are spoken of-in Colossians it is of " understanding," in Hebrews of " hope " and of "faith,"

" Prudence " is an unhappy word; here it is God's mind, His thoughts, not prudence in practice. You get the word in Proverbs. He unfolds to me His thoughts and plans about Christ; He is going to head up all things under Christ as man, and we get three reasons for this. In Colossians it is as Creator; in Hebrews Christ is the Heir as Son; and thirdly, having been rejected as Christ, He comes out as Son of man, Head over all things. Heb. 2: " He left nothing that is not put under him." He is seated at the right hand of God, but He is waiting till the time appointed to take His power and reign over all.

He has this Headship as Creator, as Son of God, and as Son of man; personal, relative, and positional Head over all; but Head to the church, which is His body. A head would be incomplete without a body.

But there redemption comes in: as a Redeemer He fills it all, not merely as God.

We have seen the plan of God as regards Christ; then I get the inheritance. The first part of the chapter is our calling, afterward we get the inheritance.

Verses 12 and 13. Those who trusted in Christ before He appears, get to be with Him-same place as the church.

We are sons by faith, not merely born; quickening and believing go together. We get the Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance, until Christ comes in His glory.

Q. Does " after that ye believed " suppose an interval?

A. No; it should be " having believed." It is not that there is an interval, but you must get the things in their order; God could not seal an unbeliever.

There is nothing in heaven that does not belong to me now.

Moses and Elias talked with Christ, that was the kingdom; then came the cloud, that was the Father's house, the Father's voice heard speaking from it, and they entered in; that was a new thing, the disciples were afraid.

Q. Does " the inheritance " include everything, heavenly and earthly?

A. The inheritance takes in all created things, you must not confound it with our calling.

Eph. 1:17, and 3. We find the distinction between God and Father in these two prayers. Here He is looked at as Head over all things. Three things the apostle prays for-that they might know " the hope " of the calling and the " riches " of the inheritance; but then he prays that they might know the " power " that raised Christ from the dead. The calling is the first part; then that they are sons, they get the inheritance because they are sons. Then he goes on to pray that their " eyes may be opened."

Three callings-in Thessalonians it is " walk worthy of God, who has called you into his kingdom and glory;" in Colossians, " walk worthy of the Lord;" here it is simply God's calling.

To Israel, God says: " The land is mine." He inherited the land, in, and through Israel; here it is His inheritance in the saints.

" That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

We are called to enjoy what is above us, and to inherit what is below us. The crowned elders were happier when they were on their faces than crowned on their thrones, more blessed to adore Him than to be in honor one's self.

They [the translators] were afraid to say " thrones," so they say " seats." Far above all.

Q. What is the eternal inheritance in Hebrews?

A. Oh! it is all eternal there. You look at the inheritance in two ways. Peter looks up, and that's eternal. Here it is-(end of the sentence lost, A. B. T.)

In Ephesians it is union, in Hebrews priesthood.

Q. Is not the " inheritance " there spoken of in connection with the new covenant, which is millennial?

A. No; all is eternal there, in contrast to Judaism. He looks at the heavenly calling, a positive thing, in contrast to the old [covenant]. God's side of the new has been accomplished, but it must be

made good with the Jew.

While God makes the principle of the two covenants different, the blood of the new is shed; but He had other purposes-the church-and the new covenant is suspended till that be accomplished. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Christ.

What delivers us from law, was not that it had lost its force, but we have died in Christ, and you cannot apply the law to a dead man, you cannot charge a dead man with having lust in his heart.

In Rom. 8, I find that what the law could not do God did-condemned sin in the flesh. It is not that He let it pass, but has done with it in the cross; it is not here that Christ died for my sins (that's true), but I died with Him.

Rom. 5:12 is the commencement of the new subject-what I am, not what I have done. I have died by faith, of course. Then there is the new life in Christ, which delights itself in God's will.

It is dead to sin in Romans, to the world in Colossians. You get not a word of all that in Ephesians, but that which takes me out of my own standing, and places me before God-Christ my righteousness-Christ my life.

In Colossians you get, "risen:" that question is not looked at in Ephesians, there it is dead in sins; I am dead in them-I am dead to God; God takes me up in Christ, and puts me in the same place. It is new creation here.

Death is spoken of in three aspects. In Colossians, "Ye are dead;" Romans, "Reckon yourselves dead;" 2 Cor. 4, "Always bearing about in the body," &c., that is, carrying it out practically. I am at liberty, because I reckon myself dead, and so I can carry it out practically.

In Ephesians, "I am dead and quickened" together with Christ; and that is new creation; that power which came in and took Christ from that state of death and puts Him at God's right hand, takes us, and puts us in Him. The result, all things under His feet, and He Head over all things to His body. He fills everything between hades and the throne of God-fills the whole thing for faith. You cannot put my spirit in a place where Christ has not been. Eph. 2:2 is the Gentiles (ver. 3 the Jew), Satan's power over the world. By nature the Jew was very far off, but not by position; by position he was near to God, the elder son.

God does not give two epistles for the same purpose. In Colossians we do not get the Holy Ghost, but we do in Ephesians, therefore there is the strongest possible contrast. "Together with Christ" is a great deal more than new life. I am taken out of the condition I was in, and put in Him, there where He is. I have divine life, but there is more here, my standing is in Christ.

The position is totally changed, it alters the whole character of the Christian, if they get hold of it. It is new creation, not merely that I get a new life, but I have got a totally new position. We have not to grow to become meet, not to grow up, &c. The growing is all right, but He has "made us" meet.

That is the ground of it; we are not in the standing of the old man before God at all. It is a wonderful thing to apply to oneself, that God is going to show forth in me the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness.

Q. "It makes us so small."

A. It makes us nothing, that is the comfort. " By grace are ye saved "-a fact, not a principle. God's salvation is, that I am going to be in the same glory as Christ.

Q. Does " that not of yourselves " apply to the whole thing?

A. No; I believe it applies to the faith-faith is just simply the word of God applied to man's soul by the Spirit of God. When the conscience is awakened, it puts God in His place, and man in his.

If I know all that is in your mind, I am your equal, as to your mind.

The Pharisee and the poor woman (Luke 7) is an instance. Who was the child of wisdom? She was kissing His feet, and honoring God-that was God's wisdom.

I believe there is instinctively in man a conscience that he has to do with a power above him. A thing that reasoning proves is never a fact, but only a consequence.

" Unto good works, foreordained;" the works as much foreordained as I am.

In chapter 1 we have the universal thought of Christ, Head over all to His body. Here (end of chap. 2) we get a new thing, not a body, as in chapter 1, but a habitation of God.

Apostles and prophets are those of the New Testament.

In the first place, Christ builds. (Matt. 16) In Peter we have, " built up as living stones"-that is another aspect. What God has already done is, to set up man in responsibility, the first thing man does, is, to fail. Then Christ comes, and makes all good in the second Adam that failed in the first. In 1 Cor. 3 " a wise master-builder "; that is man's building.

But when Christ builds, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

In Eph. 2:21 we get, first, it " groweth;" then (ver. 22), what God has set up, " ye are builded together "-it is not union here.

Q. When would you say the house will be set up in perfection?

A. In the heavenly Jerusalem. On the one hand the house, His dwelling-place; on the other, His body. It is union with Christ the Head, where it is His body, or, the bride.

Q. The body is not for the earth only?

A. Oh, not at all, it is forever. There is no union till Christ is glorified in heaven.

The Vine and the branches is not the church at all. I get the house on earth; it will be the temple forever. Consequent on the Holy Ghost coming down, the members of the body are united to Christ-entirely heavenly.

The church was never revealed in the Old Testament; not only did it not exist, but it could not be revealed till after the cross. You get the same thing in Colossians. You must have Christ glorified first, or you would have a body without a head; the church has its connection with Christ, the children with the Father. The Holy Ghost coming down from the Father puts us in the place of sons, and unites us with the Head: all that is heavenly. God has come out, and man gone in; the veil has been rent.

Col. 1:26. You cannot have the revelation of the church, and the Jews, at the same time, for they set aside each other.

In the Song of Solomon it is quite a different principle. There it is a question of going after Him, and finding Him, and losing Him (what the church never does). You have neither the place of sons, nor union with the Head.

Q. What is the difference between " children " and " sons "?

A. Well, " children " puts them in the place of relationship, but " sons " are considered as of full age. John speaks of " children," Paul, of " sons." You get " sons " in John, when it ought to be " children;" and " children," in Gal. 3, when it ought to be " sons." In 1 John 2:1, 12, 28 it is all Christians; in verses 13 and 18 it is young Christians.

Here we get a Man in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God. Consequent on that, the Holy Ghost came down (the Holy Ghost came down ten days after Christ ascended); then you get the consciousness of being sons.

You get all about Christ in the Old Testament, but no idea of union could be there.

Q. Will the temple be set up in the millennium?

A. I believe it will; the temple is never given as a figure of heavenly things, but always the tabernacle; " the faces of the cherubim turned inwards, and their wings stretched forth on high covering the mercy-seat." It was the secret counsels of God. In the temple they turned outward, and their wings stretched to the wall of the house. It was the administrative government of God.

The difference of the prayer in chapter 3 comes out in verse 15, where you get the expression, " Every family," in connection with that of " Father of the Lord Jesus." Before Abraham there was no family of faith; Abraham the root of all the promises.

God had His throne between the cherubim but no more from the Babylonish captivity. Then Christ came as a King, and they would not have Him; this sets the whole thing aside. The principle of Judaism was to keep up the partition, of Christianity to break it down.

The Syrophenician woman got through all dispensations to the heart of God; and all God's heart was at her disposal.

It is not now mercy and promises, but grace. " Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ "-the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.

The heavenly beings did not know it, for it was hid in God. Then the " manifold wisdom;" a new thing came out. Our conversation is in heaven, our hearts ought to be there; all our living associations.

If I speak of " sons," it is not union-we are justified; you are a son and I am a son, but it is individual-we are two; but when it is said " one Spirit," it is union.

This prayer is very instructive. There was not one place where it was not the Jews who raised persecution against Paul, so he says to the Gentiles, " My persecution is your glory."

Now, I get " the Father " (ver. 14) of the Lord Jesus Christ-a deeper thing than " the God of the Lord Jesus." (Chap. i. 17.) " Every family in heaven and earth;" this expression is taken from Amos 3:2-angels, principalities, the church, &c.

He revealed Himself as Almighty God to the patriarchs; as Jehovah to the Jews; it will be as Most High in the millennium. We come in as heirs with Christ, and He is our Father; we belong to no dispensation.

He does not say here, as in the prayer of chapter 1, " That ye may know;" here it is internal-we have it. He is in us as life, but here is another thing, " That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

See John 4 what a difference that makes; it spiritualizes the whole life. It is wonderful how far he goes here. In Rom. 5 " the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," -purely God's love. I get it in all its absolute purity, in the heart of God Himself. I had no part in what saved me, except my sins.

Christ is the center of all God's purposes in glory-I have Him in my heart. Thus having Christ in me, I am at the center. " That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."

What is that? Of God's glory. He brings me back to that center, and I am at the very center of the glory in heaven. It is beautiful that He puts me into the center of all the glory; he goes on, " And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge "; impossible to go beyond that! You may not be able to take it all in, but it has taken me all in.

I cannot realize the thought of infinite space, consequently I can never get out of it, I am lost in it: still, I know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We are creatures though a new creation; and shall be even in glory. " We know it " and " it passeth knowledge " go together.

Nothing of God that is revealable that is not revealed. We may think of one part at one time, and another at another time, but here we have it all revealed-" filled to all the fullness of God," " according to the power that worketh in us;. unto Him be glory in the church," &c. He is to be glorified in the church; He is looking for a power in us, and Christ being glorified in the church by that. People generally separate the last verses, but they go together; it is according to the power that worketh in us, that there will be glory to Him in the church by Christ Jesus.

Eternal Life - Manifested in Jesus and Imparted to Us

THE Epistle of John has a peculiar character. It is eternal life manifested in Jesus, and imparted to us-the life which was with the Father, and which is in the Son. It is in this life that believers enjoy the communion of the Father, that they are in relationship with the Father by the Spirit of adoption, and that they have fellowship with the Father and the Son. God's own character is that which tests it; because it proceeds from Himself.

The first chapter establishes these two latter points: namely, communion with the Father and the Son, and that this communion must be according to the essential character of God. The name of Father is that which gives character to the second chapter. Afterward it is that which God is, which tests the reality of imparted life.

The Epistles of Paul, although speaking of this life, are in general occupied with setting before christians the truth respecting the means of standing in the presence of God justified and accepted. The Epistle of John, that is to say, his First, shows us the life that comes from God by Jesus Christ. John sets God before us, the Father revealed in the Son, and eternal life in Him. Paul sets us before God accepted in Christ. I speak of what characterizes them. Each respectively touches on the other point.

Now this life is so precious, manifested as it is in the Person of Jesus, that the epistle now before us has in this respect quite a peculiar charm. When, I, too, turn my eyes to Jesus, when I contemplate all His obedience, His purity, His grace, His tenderness, His patience, His devotedness, His holiness, His love, His entire freedom from all self-seeking, I can say, That is my life.

This is immeasurable grace. It may be that it is obscured in me; but it is none the less true, that that is my life. Oh, how do I enjoy it thus seen! How I bless God for it! What rest to the soul! What pure joy to the heart! At the same time Jesus Himself is the object of my affections; and all my affections are formed on that holy object.

But we must turn to our epistle. There were many pretensions to new light, to clearer views. It was said that christianity was very good as an elementary thing; but that it was grown old, and that there was a new light which went far beyond that twilight truth.

The Person of our Lord, the true manifestation of the divine life itself, dissipated all those proud pretensions, those exaltations of the human mind under the influence of the enemy, which did but obscure the truth, and lead the mind of men back into the darkness whence they themselves proceeded.

That which was from the beginning (of christianity, that is, in the Person of Christ), that which they had heard, had seen with their own eyes, had contemplated, had touched with their own hands, of the Word of life-that was it which the apostle declared. For the life itself had been manifested. That life which was with the Father had been manifested to the disciples. Could there be anything more

perfect, more excellent, any development more admirable in the eyes of God, than Christ Himself, than that Life which was with the Father, manifested in all its perfection in the Person of the Son? As soon as the Person of the Son is the object of our faith, we feel that perfection must have been at the beginning.

The Person then of the Son, the eternal life manifested in the flesh, is our subject in this epistle.

Grace is consequently to be remarked here in that which regards life; while Paul presents it in connection with justification. The law promised life upon obedience; but life came in the Person of Jesus, in all its own divine perfection, in its human manifestations. Oh how precious is the truth that this life, such as it was with the Father, such as it was in Jesus, is given to us! In what relationships it sets us by the power of the Holy Ghost, with the Father and with the Son Himself! And this is what the Spirit here first sets before us. And observe how it is all grace here. Farther on, indeed, He tests all pretensions to the possession of fellowship with God, by displaying God's own character; a character from which He can never deviate. But, before entering on this, he presents the Savior Himself, and communion with the Father and the Son by this means, without question and without modification. This is our position and our eternal joy.

The apostle had seen that life, had touched it with his own hands; and he wrote to others, proclaiming this, in order that they also should have communion with Him in the knowledge of the life which had been thus manifested. Now, inasmuch as that life was the Son, it could not be known without knowing the Son, that is, that which He was, entering into His thoughts, His feelings: otherwise He is not really known. It was thus they had communion with Him.-with the Son. Precious fact! to enter into the thoughts (all the thoughts), and into the feelings, of the Son of God come down in grace: to do this in fellowship with Him, that is to say, not only knowing them, but sharing these thoughts and feelings with Him. In effect it is the life.

But we cannot have the Son without having the Father. He who had seen Him had seen the Father; and consequently he who had communion with the Son had communion with the Father, for their thoughts and feelings were all one. He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. We have fellowship therefore with the Father. And this is true also when we look at it in another aspect. We know that the Father has entire delight in the Son. Now He has given us, by revealing the Son, to take our delight in Him also, feeble as we are. I know, when I am delighting in Jesus-in His obedience, His love to His Father, to us, His single eye and purely devoted heart-I have the same feelings, the same thoughts, as the Father Himself. In that the Father delights, cannot but delight, in Him in whom I now delight, I have communion with the Father. So with the Son in the knowledge of the Father. All this flows, whether in the one or the other point of view, from the Person of the Son. Herein our joy is full. What can we have more than the Father and the Son? what more perfect happiness than community of thoughts, feelings, joys, and communion, with the Father and the Son, deriving all our joy from themselves? And if it seem difficult to believe, let us remember that, in truth, it cannot be otherwise: for, in the life of Christ, the Holy Ghost is the source of my thoughts, feelings, communion, and He cannot give thoughts different from those of the Father and the Son. They must be in their nature the same. To say that they are adoring thoughts is in the very nature of things, and only makes them more precious. To say that they are feeble and often hindered, while the Father and the Son are divine and perfect, is, if true, to say the Father and the Son are God, are divine, and we feeble creatures. That surely none will deny. But if the blessed

Spirit be the source, they must be the same as to nature and fact.

This is our christian position then, here below in time, through the knowledge of the Son of God; as the apostle says, " These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

But He who was the life which came from the Father, has brought us the knowledge of God. The apostle had heard from His lips that which God was-knowledge of priceless value, but which searches the heart. And this also the apostle, on the Lord's part, announces to believers. This then is the message which they had heard from Him, namely, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness. With regard to Christ, He spoke that which He knew, and bore testimony to that which He had seen. No one had been in heaven, save He who came down from thence. No one had seen God. The Only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, He had declared Him. No one had seen the Father, save He who was of God; He had seen the Father. Thus He could, of His own and perfect knowledge, reveal Him. Now God was light, perfect purity, which makes manifest at the same time all that is pure, and all that is not so. To have communion with light, one must oneself be light, be of its nature, and fit to be seen in the perfect light. It can only be linked with that which is of itself. If there is anything else that mingles with it, light is no longer light. It is absolute in its nature, so as to exclude all that is not itself.

Therefore, if we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice truth: our life is a perpetual lie.

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we (believers) have communion with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. These are the great principles, the great features of christian position. We are in the presence of God without a veil. It is a real thing, a matter of life and of walk. It is not the same thing as walking according to the light; but it is in the light. That is to say, that this walk is before the eyes of God, enlightened by the full revelation of what He is. It is not that there is no sin in us; but, walking in the light, the will and the conscience being in the light as God is in it, everything is judged that does not answer to it. We live and walk morally in the sense that God is present, and as knowing Him. We walk thus in the light. The moral rule of our will is God Himself, God known. The thoughts that sway the heart come from Himself and are formed upon the revelation of Himself. The apostle puts these things always in an abstract way: thus he says " he cannot sin, because he is born of God"; and that maintains the moral rule of this life; it is its nature; it is the truth, inasmuch as the man is born of God. We cannot have any other measure of it: any other would be false. It does not follow, alas! that we are always consistent; but we are inconsistent if we are not in this state; we are not walking according to the nature that we possess; we are out of our true condition according to that nature.

Moreover, walking in the light, as God is in the light, believers have communion with each other. The world is selfish. The flesh, the passions, seek their own gratification; but, if I walk in the light, self has no place there. I can enjoy the light, and all I seek in it, with another, and there is no jealousy. If another possess a carnal thing, I am deprived of it. In the light we have fellow-possession of that which He gives us, and we enjoy it the more by sharing it together. This is a touchstone to all that is of the flesh. As much as one is in the light, so much will we have fellow-enjoyment with another who is in it. The apostle, as we have said, states this in an abstract and absolute way. This is the truest way to know the thing itself. The rest is only a question of realization.

In the third place, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

To walk in the light as God is in it, to have fellowship with one another, to be cleansed from all sin by the blood; these are the three parts of christian position. We feel the need there is of the last; for, while walking in the light as God is in the light, with (blessed be God) a perfect revelation to us of Himself, with a nature that knows Him, that is capable of seeing Him spiritually, as the eye is made to appreciate light (for we participate in the divine nature), we cannot say that we have no sin. The light itself would contradict us. But we can say that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us perfectly from all sin. Through the Spirit we enjoy the light together: it is the common joy of our hearts before God, and well pleasing to Him; a testimony to our common participation in the divine nature, which is love also. And our conscience is no hindrance, because we know the value of the blood. We have no conscience of sin upon us before God, though we know it is in us; but we have the conscience of being clean from it by the blood. But the same light which shows us this, prevents our saying (if we are in it) that we have no sin in us; we should deceive ourselves if we said so; and the truth would not be in us; for if the truth were in us, if that revelation of the divine nature, which is light, Christ our life, were in us, the sin that is in us would be judged by the light itself. If it be not judged, this light-the truth which speaks of things as they are-.is not in us.

If, on the other hand, we have even committed sin, and all, being judged according to the light, is confessed (so that the will no longer takes part in it, the pride of that will being broken down), He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all iniquity. If we say that we have not sinned (as a general truth), it shows not only that the truth is not in us, but we make God a liar; His word is not in us, for He says that all have sinned. There are the three things: we lie; the truth is not in us; we make God a liar. It is this fellowship with God in the light, which, in practical daily christian life, inseparably connects forgiveness, and the present sense of it by faith, and purity of heart.

Thus we see the christian position (verse 7); and then the things which, in three different ways, are opposed to the truth-to communion with God in life.

The apostle wrote that which relates to the communion with the Father and the Son, in order that their joy might be full.

That which he wrote according to the revelation of the nature of God, which he had received from Him who was the life from heaven, was in order that they should not sin. But to say this is to suppose that they might sin. Not that it is necessary they should do so; for the presence of sin in the flesh by no means obliges us to walk after the flesh. But if it should take place, there is provision made by grace, in order that grace may act, and that we may be neither condemned, nor brought again under the law.

We have an Advocate with the Father, One who carries on our cause for us on high. Now this is not in order to obtain righteousness, nor again to wash our sins away. All that has been done. Divine righteousness has placed us in the light, even as God Himself is in the light. But communion is interrupted, if even levity of thought finds place in our heart; for it is of the flesh, and the flesh has no communion with God. When communion is interrupted, when we have sinned (not when we have repented, for it is His intercession that leads to repentance), Christ intercedes for us. Righteousness is always present-our righteousness-" Jesus Christ the Righteous." Therefore, neither the righteousness nor the value of the propitiation for sin being changed, grace acts (one

may say, acts necessarily) in virtue of that righteousness, and of that blood which is before. God-acts, on the intercession of Christ who never forgets us, in order to bring us back to communion by means of repentance. Thus, while yet on earth, before Peter had committed the sin, He prayed for him; at the given moment He looks on him, and Peter repents and weeps bitterly for his offense. Afterward the Lord does all that is necessary to make Peter judge the root itself of the sin; but all is grace.

It is the same in our case. Divine righteousness abides the immutable foundation of our relationships with God, established on the blood of Christ. When communion, which exists only in the light, is interrupted, the intercession of Christ, available by virtue of His blood (for propitiation for the sin has also been made), restores the, soul that it may still again enjoy communion with God according to the light, into which righteousness has introduced it. This propitiation is made for the whole world, not for the Jews only, nor to the exclusion of any one at all; but for the whole world, God in His moral nature having been fully glorified by the death of Christ.

These three capital points-or, if you will, two capital points, and the third, namely, advocacy, which is supplementary -form the introduction, the doctrine of the epistle. All the rest is an experimental application of that which this part contains: namely, first (life being given), communion with the Father and the Son; second, the nature of God, light, which manifests the falsehood of all pretension to communion with the light, if the walk be in darkness; and third, seeing that sin is in us, and that we may fail although we are cleansed before God so as to enjoy the light, the advocacy which Jesus Christ the righteous can always exercise before God, on the ground of the righteousness which is ever in His presence, and the blood which is shed for our sins, in order to restore our communion, when we have lost it by our guilty negligence.

The Eternal Sonship of Christ - 1 John 5:7

THOUGH I have ever held this verse, to say the least, to be very doubtful from the course of the meaning, it is not to discuss this at present I write, but another point of importance -the use of the term Son.

There are those who, objecting to the term Son as applied to the divinity of our Lord, stand on the verge, if not slipping into, confusion of the Persons.

It is the name of the Person, not the nature; and the Person is personally known to us, fully in the revelation of God in Jesus.

But while no man knowing the Son but the Father, the manifestation of God in the Son-in Jesus-makes the language of man scarce preservable from error, if we wish to affirm things separately, of the natures when affirmed about the Son, yet is that which is revealed very distinct, but it is spoken about the Person into which the man was brought. and therefore is rightly spoken of Jesus, and the connecting point of faith, not to know there is a Son, but that Jesus is the Son of God.

Nevertheless the works of God as such are directly attributed to the Son before the incarnation of, or rather in, Jesus, and therefore we are justified (much more than justified) in speaking of the Son as we do in the Trinity.

Thus Heb. 1 has "spoken to us by the Son,... by Whom also He made the worlds." We are therefore justified in speaking of the Son as before the worlds.

Again in Col. 1 where His whole personal glory is brought out-"In Whom we have redemption" (His dear Son) "... the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created which are in heaven and upon earth... all things were created by Him" (i.e., the Son) "and for Him; and He is before all things," (the present state) "and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body" (His official glory), "the church,... the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased"-not the Father, this much misleads, but-"the Godhead that in Him" (the Son) "should all fullness dwell" (to wit, in Jesus)-for in Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

The Father dwelt in Him, and the Holy Ghost was upon, in all its fullness of indwelling presence.

Could there, I need scarce say, be separation, but He was not the Father, nor the Holy Ghost, but the Son.

Though He did His works by the Spirit, and the Father that dwelt in Him did the works, all fullness dwelt in Him.

He was the Son, and by Him all things reconciled, His actual efficient work.

In a word, God was in Christ, but there again we have the warrant for the speaking the name of His Person as revealed to us of the Son as before the worlds, "In Whom..."

Again that our Lord was addressed as the Son in His Godhead is further manifest as it is said and written, "... unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom."

They therefore seem to err who do not give the title of Son to our Lord as connected with His Godhead, if they say this name is known to us only through His manifestation in the flesh.

I believe so surely, both of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost alike unknown to us before we knew them by the indwelling and revelation of Jesus, God manifest (in the flesh), illustrating His character and opening out the fullness more revealingly.

I feel it would be opening a gap for evil to acquiesce any further in this, for the Scripture does not acquiesce in it, though as stated below it is not only sound but blessed and glorious truth, but it is better to acquiesce in nothing but Scripture, for one does not know where it would carry one.

The Word was personally known to us as the Son revealing the Father by the Spirit, and we beheld that the glory of the Word was the glory even in Jesus of the only begotten with a Father, His nature, inheritance and dignity the same, though while humbled He gave the glory all to Him in all that is revealed in this.

I fear using the fountain of blessing and glory in men's cavils, distortion, and pride.

But I say we are scripturally justified, and bound to silence these cavils, in speaking of the Son as acting in His creative capacity in the Godhead before the worlds, although we know that Person, or any Person, by His incarnation in which centered the unfolding of the mystery.

But we are bound to hold to this most important and essential (strictly speaking essential) truth as connected with the revelation of anything and subjection to any truth at all, for all blessing flows from believing and receiving from the Father, by the Son and through the Holy Ghost-thus the revealed, known and worshipped source of all blessing, the sum of the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.

Nor is it less important that we should understand Son to be the name of the Person, not of the nature, for as we see that by Him He made the worlds, God over all blessed for evermore, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day and forever," competent to sit in the glory of His Father's throne, and sitting there in the glory which He had with Him before the world was.

So also we know that "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law," than which indeed as magnifying the law nothing can be more wonderful; and "then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that did put all things under Him."

If we ask how can this be, we have the evidence of that 'in the fact of His having been so before; and thus the Lord secures and settles our faith, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit bringing us into blessing by giving us the facts of faith realized when they might be difficult of intelligence as to their internal possibility from our narrow nature and might be said to be contrary to natural possibility.

So it is written, "the Father sent the Son to be the Savior."

If we say He were not the Son till the incarnation, then do I utterly lose the link of connection of His being sent from above, for then were it only after He was a Man in the world that He was sent about as a Man, but no, He was sent into the world-not to multiply passages, which are innumerable, for our connection with God hangs upon it.

If therefore the name Word be applied to our Lord previously so as to deny the relationship of Son instead of, as I have said, further illustrating what He is, Whom none knoweth but the Father, then I say that is using the testimony of "the brightness of His glory" to destroy a distinct glory and the first glory and blessing of Christianity, i.e. in relation to us.

Moreover the full glory of our Lord's headship hangs upon the recognition of this truth, for as Firstborn of every creature it is by Him all things were created. So that the headship of creation in the Son rests upon this "for by Him...."

Hence we strike at the sphere of our Lord's glory if we strike at the creative Sonship.

It is most important therefore as regards our relationship to God-that first link in the chain that brings us to God, gives us fellowship with the Father, and is the spring therefore of all this very point.

The Father sent the Son... it is what each were, the Sender and the Sent. I know nothing previous to this.

It is the Son that is the "brightness," only I did not know this nor Him till the incarnation, nor did a Gentile till the resurrection, nor indeed any till it pleased God to reveal it in Him, though there are full glimpses of it and statements in the Old Testament.

Nor did I know the Father a bit more, nor the Holy Spirit in His indwelling, though holy men spake by Him.

No more than I know the Son till taught of Him (though He made the worlds), nor the Father till the Son reveal Him.

But the office of Christianity is to reveal the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to make known this relationship in the Godhead (in our enjoyment of the results) into which creature is brought in blessing in the intelligent, Spirit-taught and quickened church the personal fullness of Him Who being such filleth all in all because the fullness dwelt in Him.

Most important as regards His glory because the creative power is thus associated with redemptive power-is associated with, as the basis of the headship glory.

Prov. 30:1-6 is a most important passage, humbling us to profit, and yet opening to faith what man cannot enter into-a very important passage.

I have made this memorandum not to prove (it is known by communion in my own soul, i.e., to myself, communion with the Father by Him), but to show its importance because of the destructiveness of breaking the blessed link. The Word is our most important revelation of what He the Lord is-most important.

The Son is another most important revelation of what He, Jesus, is-the revelation, the name, the truth of His relationship in person in God, or in the Godhead.

If we do not see Him in this with the Father, we lose all the value of it in Him as incarnate.

It is another revelation about Him....

No one can give me the partakings of the divine nature. No one can call me into this relationship in integral blessing unless he be in it vitally, unless he be in it in His union with the Father....

Therefore the holy thing born of the virgin Is called the Son of God, and in Him the fullness is manifested ever of God, and yet we are adopted into it further.

Officially the Word, might I not say, constitutes the apostleship, the Son the priesthood of Christ, both exercised as a Man, but in both competent for it from their respective characters. In a word, He is the Son.

As to any question arising from the term "begotten," it is only weakness itself, for if we argue from the Word, He was a Son before He was begotten, for the resurrection was the day He was begotten, yet was He not a Son while walking on the earth?

When He made the worlds He was a Son. I know Him as a Son in all that He is, and His acts, through some of them here. "Though He were a Son"-I see it as clearly as God's own truth, and it is in this I have to be receptive of truth by God in grace, not judging by my poor incapable intellect.

The love of the truth is a great matter in subjection of spirit, not to lay down the imaginations of man, but to be thankful for the communion of God, and not to depart, or bear departure from the Scriptures.

When we have to speak, God's Spirit will teach us what to say. As for me, I feel I may err in every word. I resist utterly when the truth of God is set aside, yea I trust ever will, by His grace.

As for me myself, I am but as the beasts that perish incapable of these things to know them. As revealed they are all my blessing, for God is revealed (reveals Himself) in them to me. So that one is taught of God's Spirit. I could not depart from them. I hold them fast with life. They are between me and my God in thought. I defend them and I do not discuss them with men as questions. I speak of matters of faith which have been made known by faith to me, as God gives me utterance, and I recur to His word to guard as it teaches them where His Spirit is. I hold it vital to hold the Sonship before the worlds. It is the truth.

This article was found by one who came into possession of many of J.N.D.'s Mss. letters and papers in 1938.

The original Mss. can be seen by appointment by any of the Lord's people at Bank House, Redruth, Cornwall.

The Father's House - John 14

THIS chapter presents an object before our souls so as to give us our portion in Christ—a portion in the Father's house; and secondly how we get into this place. It wonderfully brings before us our place now that He is absent from us (though in one sense He is never absent), what the comfort of the Christian is, and the place into which God has brought him. This is no fresh truth, but showing where the heart of the Christian is when he really has Christ before him and the Holy Ghost working in him.

Christ was going away and it was natural that they should be troubled. At the end of the chapter He says to them in a touching way, "If you thought of me you would be glad that I am going back to my Father, and out of this scene of sin and sorrow." Still, it seemed to them that they were going to lose Him, and it was natural they should grieve; and so He gives them what is to be their comfort when He is gone.

Besides this, there is His coming again brought in. "I cannot stay with you here," He says, "but I will take you where I am going." The whole state of the world was unfit for Him to remain on the earth. He could not rest here. He could stay for a time and serve, but could not rest. Even long before, in the Old Testament, it is said "This is not your rest, for it is polluted"; but this only led to the blessed truth that He was going to give us a rest where He could rest, with the Father, and that His work was so perfect and so effectual that He could give us a place there. We have got a portion where He has all His glory, all His rest, the fruit of the travail of His soul.

"In my Father's house are many mansions... I go to prepare a place for you." Mark this, it was in His Father's house, the place that He had as Son, where He was at home, there He was going to prepare my place. That is unspeakable blessing! It was a comfort, a joy to have Christ with them in the world, but that was by the way. He was going to prepare a place where He was at home. Think what the home of such a heart as His must be! Where all His divine affections would flow out, the divine Son, and yet a Man, and to think that this is the place where He is going to take us. What a wonderful thing! What a home must that be!

"I will come again and receive you unto myself." Not call you up, that would not do: not send for you, that would not do: but "I will come." How touching! Though gone into glory and sitting on His Father's throne, He would leave it to come and fetch us into His Father's house. His affections are so set on us that He is not satisfied without coming Himself for us; He would not send. It is not only the blessedness to us of His coming Himself for us, but it is the expression of Christ's heart. He wants it, wants to have us. It is His own interest in us, His love to us. When we know that, then the heart is drawn out to Himself. No doubt it is an unspeakable blessing to us, but it is the revelation of Christ Himself. The one only blessed hope of the Church is that He would come again and fetch us. Confidence is sure that when we are unclothed we shall be with the Lord, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Yet that is not the hope; the hope is that He will come and fetch us. It is on His heart and should be on ours. They went out to meet the bridegroom; that was the condition of the Church at the first. Converted to wait for His Son from heaven, they all went to

sleep, wise as well as foolish, and had to be waked by the midnight cry. It was " My Lord delayeth His coming," that brought deadness into the Church, that led to the eating and drinking and drunkenness, beating the men-servants and maid-servants.

This is no truth that may or may not be held. It is essential to the daily life of the Christian. If I am daily expecting Christ I shall not like to be in any place where I would not like Him to find me, and whatever would not please Him I should put off, whatever it is. We are looking for One who loves us. His heart wants us, and He is going to satisfy His heart. It is not prophecy; prophecy has to do with God's government of this world, and it is very interesting in its place, but it has nothing to do with our hope.

Now comes in another thing. If I am sending my son, or orphan, if you please-though in one sense we are not left orphans-to a strange place, the grand point would be for him to know what sort of person it was that I was going to send him to live with. Heaven is a very vague place if I have not got a Person in it. If there were no one there-if we were to dwell in a holy place by ourselves-it would not do. We should have no object there before our souls. There would be an immense gap. Of course, it is not possible that it should be so. And so He tells us that we have known the Father if we have known Him, that it is the Father's house He is going to, and going to take us to. So the grand point for us is how we can know the Father and perfect satisfaction. It is not like this poor empty world, which, our hearts being made for God, is too small ever to fill them. This object is too big for our hearts. I press this, how close the Father has been brought to us. They had seen Him and so had seen the Father; and when they ask the way, He says, " I am the way."

" Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father." They had got the full blessedness, but their poor hearts did not know it. Could He say to us, " Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me? " Or can we say that our souls have so seen the Father in the Person of the Son, that we can say, " I have found it all, I have got it." It is that that forms the heart as to its affections. If we have followed Christ in His path down here-followed Him in the Gospels-have we learned the Father's ways in the Son? He passed all on that He enjoys of the Father to the disciples that they might enjoy it with Him. How much have we learned of this favor and blessedness which He reveals? I cannot learn anything of it that is not mine, " that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." All things are mine.

The Lord presses this upon them, that " no man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." It is a wrong thought that He left the Father's bosom. He never did; He left the Father's house. You get in Christ the full revelation of what the Father is. The only begotten Son, all the Father's delight centers in Him, in the bosom of the Father, that is in the full enjoyment of it, He declares the Father. I see He is infinite, and I adore Him, but I see He is the revelation of the Father's love to me, as I go over His life down here.

It is not merely saying, I am a lost sinner and have been saved, but it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in me, occupying me with Christ, having fellowship with the Father and the Son, that is my portion. When I say I have fellowship with any one down here, I mean I have the same thoughts, the same joys, the same ways. Is that true of us with the Father and the Son? It gives holiness of thoughts of course, and it gives piety of thoughts; that is you get affections according to the relationship you are in, suitable to that which is before your soul.

Supposing my soul is dwelling on the blessed obedience of Christ-His obedience unto death-and I am adoringly sitting and contemplating Christ so, does not the Father contemplate it too? Do not I know the Father's delight in it too? " Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life," and that is why I love Him because He has laid down His Life, in my poor feeble measure, of course, but it is having the same object.

Do not rest satisfied if you do not know what it is to enjoy the Father's favor in the Son, and to know the Father revealed in all the ways of Christ, that the Son of God is come into the world to reveal the Father. How much have your hearts learned what He came down to let you know, the love of the Father and the Son?

Now He goes on to the other Comforter. The world ought to have recognized Christ, for He did among them the works that none other man did, but the world has nothing to do with the Holy Ghost. When the Holy Ghost comes there is no personal manifestation of Him to the world. " Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not neither knoweth Him." They ought to see His fruits in the disciples of course, but they cannot see Him. " But ye know Him for He dwelleth with you and shall be in you." Christ could not abide. It was necessary that He should put Man in heaven and send the Holy Ghost down. It is now not merely the revelation of the Father and the Son, but it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Christ dwelt with, but not in His disciples, the Holy Ghost dwells in us.

Now I get another thing, that being sprinkled by the blood of Jesus Christ and perfectly clean the Holy Ghost can take up His abode in us. It was not simply that a man was born again-being born again is not righteousness before God. There is a mixture, my poor flesh is there. I may hate the evil, hate myself for it, but it does not cleanse the conscience, but when I get the work of Christ outside myself, then it is according to the value God has of the blood of Christ that I am clean in His sight. In virtue of Christ being at the right hand of God my righteousness, the Spirit of God can come and take up his abode in me. Now He abides, now we get the power in us. Our bodies the temple of the Holy Ghost. What a thought! Who that thought of it could use his body for sin, who that thought of it could deck it out with vanities? We forget it or we never could, this wonderful thought that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost! If we just think of that what servants of Christ we should be in everything. We should be so careful not to grieve the Spirit. God dwelling in us as a Guest, what a thought! See the effect of that when I

receive the Holy Ghost. " In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father." He does not add here, "and the Father in Me." The world was the place where they needed to know that. When they wanted to know about the Father, then it was, " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But now it was to know that this Man-this " carpenter's son," whose visage was marred more than any man's, who was treated as a malefactor, who underwent the outrages of man-that He is in the Father, and one with the Father. It brings God to us, and us to God.

And now mark what follows " Ye in Me," " Ye shall know this." I do not want this simply as a truth, but do you know, are you living in the consciousness that you are in Christ and Christ in you? Are you living day by day in that consciousness? Is that your life? It is our whole place now; we are in Christ, and in the presence of God. It is not only that He is in the presence of God between God and us to intercede for us, but we are in Him there, and the favor that rests on Him rests on us. I am in Christ Himself before God, and, moreover, Christ is in me, Now I get the standard of walk.

He is before God for me and I in Him, and I am before the world for Him and He in Me. This gives us the measure of our walk down here. If it is true that you are in Christ, Christ is in you, and now let me see Him. I look to see nothing in your walk, or ways, or manner, or anything about you that is not Christ. Do you manifest Christ in everything? In your walk, and ways, and dress and everything?

The heart sees Him now. All that made God delight in Him we are called to esteem and to apprehend by the Holy Ghost, "because I live ye shall live also." If Christ is my life, He must die before I can die. If I look up to God, divine favor rests upon me. I am in Christ. If I want to know how to walk, Christ is in me and I am to show Him.

Then He closes this chapter in a way that is wondrously touching. I am to be concerned about His happiness. The place He has set us in is His own, as sons with the Father, the righteousness of God in Him. He is our life, and then, having put us in His own place, He leaves us His path. I ask you where your heart's time is spent? Is it spent in Christ or in tittle-tattle or what not? What springs up when we meet one another, is it Christ or what is in Christ? Or is it the tittle-tattle of the world? I am not talking of evil, I am supposing you know Him and are not going on in sin. But when the pressure of what you have to do is taken off, does Christ come forth?

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The way that Christ gives is to bring us into the enjoyment of all that He enjoys Himself. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." He leaves us His own path.

There is such a wonderful expression here of how He identifies Himself with us and expects us to identify ourselves with Him: expects our affections to be occupied with Him. I know no such expression, showing how near he has come to us, how near He has brought us to Himself, as this. "If you are thinking of yourselves," He says, "you will be sorry that I am going to leave you. If you are thinking of Me you will be glad that I am going back to my Father's house."

The Lord give us to have our eye resting on Him, on the fullness of grace in Him, so that knowing what He is going to take us into, we may know Him in us now; in Christ and Christ in me; and know His strength to go on, showing Him forth.

A Few Helpful Remarks for the Present Times

This is the time of trial for the beloved brethren gathered to the name, and for the name, of the Lord Jesus, because the pretensions and energy of man are strongly manifesting themselves. It is not an easy thing to content ourselves with being simply that which we are in reality before God. Times of "revival" make manifest the thoughts of many hearts; but to learn, in a day of grace, to be still, and know that God is God, is completely above the education of the flesh.

The spirit of the age affects many Christians, who labor to restore old things for the service of God, instead of being broken before Him by the sense of their downfall. I do not at all doubt their sincerity, but I fear that they have not judged themselves and they do not know the true state of ruin surrounding them; so that they cannot have an adequate confidence in the living God alone, as the God of all resources, in the midst of a scene where man has failed everywhere and in everything. We ought never to be afraid of the whole truth. To confess openly that which we are in the presence of that which God is, is always the way to peace and blessing. Even when only two or three are together before God, if it be thus with them there will be no disappointments nor deluded hopes. If the wells dug in Abraham's days have been filled and stopped up by earth, we have to do with a God who can bring water out of the stricken rock, and make it flow in the dry desert, to refresh His thirsty, weary people. I do not envy the labor of those who dig channels in the sand for water-courses which, after all, may take another direction.

God's ways of acting, in all times of blessing, consist in reproducing the glories and the work of the Lord Jesus. The darker becomes the long night of apostasy, the more distinctly the Light of Life makes itself seen. The word for the remnant is, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." He is the only center of gathering. Men may make confederations amongst themselves, having many things for their object or aim, but the communion of saints cannot be known unless each line converges towards this living Center. The Holy Ghost does not gather saints around mere views, however true they may be, upon that which the church is, upon that which it has been, or that which it may be, on the earth, but He always gathers them around that blessed Person, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20.) One may be certain that Satan and the flesh will seek to resist this work and this path of the Lord, or seek to overturn them.

We need to be watchful against boasting, as people do in these days; need to be still in the presence of God. There is much independence and self-will almost everywhere. "We shall do great things" is the most inappropriate cry we can hear just at this time, when the light has shown how little we have done. God would have us know His truth as that which delivers us. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This liberty is not that of the flesh, because it penetrates our hearts with all the reality of a separation well known to God, who is holy. We enter, unhindered into this position, with hearts broken and humiliated. If any one speaks of separation from evil, without being humiliated, let him take care lest his position becomes simply only that which at all times has constituted sects, and produced, doctrinal heresy.

As to our service we have seen our precious Lord and Master, in profound self-abasement, wash the feet of His disciples, making Himself an example-for whom? For us, surely. Now I know, at the present time, of no service which is worthy of Him, or agreeable to Him, if it is not done in humiliation. This is not the time to speak of a place for ourselves. If the church of God, so dear to Christ, is dishonored in this world; if it is scattered, ignorant, afflicted, he who has the mind of Christ will always take the lowest place. True service of love will seek to give according to the need, and because of their need, he will never think of slighting the objects of the Master's love because of their necessity. Men taught of God, for His service, go forth from a place of strength, where they have learned their own weakness and their own nothingness. They find that Jesus is everything in the presence of God, and Jesus is everything for them in all things, and everywhere. Such men, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, are real helps for the children of God, and they will not contend for a place, or a distinction, or for authority, amongst the scattered flock. The communion of a man with God about the church will show itself in a willingness to be nothing in himself, and such a one will rejoice in his heart to spend and to be spent.

In our personal recollections we have lessons to learn with fear and trembling. May the thought of power never occupy our hearts too much. "Power belongeth unto God." Nearly twenty years ago there was a time of great excitement; everywhere people sought power, and would have crossed the seas to find it. Many thought of the church, but it was rather the church in power. Feeling that power was lost, they said: How are we to regain it? Thenceforth they again occupied themselves with earthly things, as if they could work deliverance on this earth. Many remember how, at that time, Satan was able to bring man forward; the result has been the same everywhere.

Whatever was the form that such efforts adopted, they were followed by deceptions and invariably it was agreed to renounce them (for all failed of their end), and nothing but sects was the result. There were deadly marks of hostility against the Lord Jesus; or else, if His name was left without spot, the path was prepared for another terrible result, namely, to annul the presence of the Holy Spirit who alone can glorify Jesus.

The great Shepherd will not forget the work done in His name, with a willing heart, for His beloved sheep, so poor and needy. Abundant praise and an unfading crown of glory, in the day of His appearing, will be the portion of those who act thus. God will remember all He can remember, and nothing will lose its reward. I am not surprised at the disappointments which have followed all the efforts people have made in the church to introduce some formal system of ministry, authority or government. God cannot permit us to enlarge the ground upon which, in these days, He is pleased to find and to bless His saints. We know well what is the way of the flesh which has never concerned itself at all about the fall of the church: it is to seek to occupy a position among men in the place where God has never granted it.

There is great instruction in the conduct of Zerobabel, recounted in the book of Ezra. The son and heir of David takes his place with the remnant returned from the captivity; he is content to labor at Jerusalem, without throne or crown. Building the altar of the Lord and the house of God, he served God and his generation in all simplicity. Heir of the place which Solomon had occupied in days of prosperity and glory, he spoke not of his birth, nor of his rights. However, he is faithful in all the path of separation, of sorrow, and of conflicts he is obliged to pass through.

May the Lord give us to be more and more confident in Himself, in these days of trial. "When I am weak, then am I strong," is a lesson Paul had to learn by a very humiliating process. If we speak of our testimony upon the earth, it will soon be evident that all is but weakness, and, like the seed lost upon the wayside the testimony will likewise end to our shame. But if the living God has by us a testimony to His own glory upon the earth, then the sense of weakness will only bring us more directly into the place of His power. An apostle with a thorn in the flesh learned the sufficiency of the grace of Christ. A little remnant is re-united and gathered, having nothing wherein it can glory in the flesh; but it is thus that it is ready to remain faithful to the name of Jesus, when that which seemed to be something before men has failed.

Neither the anger, nor the prudence, nor the pretensions of man can do anything, in the state of confusion in which the church is now. I freely own that I have no hope in the efforts which many make to assure themselves an ecclesiastical position. When the house is ruined in its foundations by an earthquake it matters little how one tries to make it an agreeable dwelling-place. We shall do better to remain where the first discovery of the ruin of things by man's deed has placed us—with our faces in the dust. Such is the place which belongs to us by right, and, after all, it is the place of blessing. In Revelation, it is in falling at the feet of Christ that John learns the actual state of the churches. Afterward he was taken to heaven, that from thence he might see the judgments coming subsequently upon the earth; but the evil in the church cannot be well known, unless one is humbled at the feet of Jesus.

I have read of a time when several were gathered together in such sorrow of heart, that for a long time they could not utter a single word; but the floor of the meeting-room was wet with their tears. If the Lord would grant us such meetings again, it would be our wisdom to frequent these houses of tears. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy." (Psa. 126; 5) It is not only for the earthly remnant that this is true, it is also written for us. I would willingly take a long journey to join these afflicted ones; but I would not go a step with the object of receiving from the hands of most excellent men power to overturn all today, and reconstruct tomorrow.

All we can do is to walk watchfully, but quietly thinking of the interests of the Lord Jesus, and having nothing for ourselves, nothing to gain, and nothing to lose. The path of peace, the place of testimony, is in seeking to please God. We need to watch over ourselves, lest, after having been preserved from the corruption of the age by the very precious truths revealed to us in our weakness, we should be taken in the net of presumption, or thrown into insubordination. These are things which God can never recognize or tolerate, since we are called to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The word of God remains the same today as always. Nothing which has happened has changed His purpose, which is to glorify the Lord Jesus. If we are humble before Him, all that which is for the glory of Christ will be of the greatest importance to us. What would we more?

I have no doubt that if we kept close to Christ, His Spirit would guide us in our intercourse with others. We are not always conscious of divine guidance even when it is there; but the word comes from Christ to the souls we have to say to, even if rejected.... But our part is to keep close to Christ, so that it should be "not I, but Christ liveth in me," and thus He acts in our thoughts and ways without our, at the moment, thinking of Him directly; but we always have the consciousness of speaking for Him, and of His presence.

The Spirit and the word cannot be separated without falling into fanaticism on the one hand, or into rationalism on the other-without putting oneself outside the place of dependence upon God and of His guidance.

Fragment: God's Warfare

Many have not the courage to go on in God's warfare, because they hold on to something which is inconsistent with the light they have received. Perhaps, alas 1 they lose the light which they have not acted up to, and Satan is able to bring their mind under the darkness of his good reasons for staying where they are without conquering more territory from him.

The armor should be put on before the battle, not just at the battle.

Fragment: Humbled and Glorified Christ

Christ is presented in glory as One who leads us on in energy, conforming us to what He is according to glory; and... when the question is of nourishing the inward life... and character, it is the humbled Christ on whom we have to feed. This is partly the case in Phil. 2 and 3: the former the inward state and character, Christ coming down; the latter a glorified Christ, the Object after which we run.

Fragment: Moses' Hands Stretched Out

Moses, Aaron and Hur go up to the top of the hill, and Israel under Joshua fights in the plain below with Amalek.... Israel might have reasoned on the manner of their fighting, on the strength of the enemy, and on ten thousand things; but, after all, their success depended on Moses' hands being stretched out. It is very hard for us to see ourselves and Satan to be as nothing and God to be everything.

Fragment: No Strength but in Christ

There is no strength but in Christ. I have none at any time except as my soul is in secret communion with Him.... Now the direct power of Satan is towards this point, to keep our souls from living on Christ.

One great thing we have to seek is that communion with Christ be as strong as all the doctrines we hold or teach. Without that the doctrine itself will have no force: besides, we ourselves shall not be with God in it, and, after all, that is all.

Fragment: Occupied With Jesus

When we are occupied with Jesus the littleness of all that one is, or of all that one has done, remains in the shade, and Jesus Himself alone stands out in relief.

There is a danger of being too much occupied with evil; it does not refresh, does not help the soul on. " Abstain from every form of evil," but be occupied ourselves and occupy others with Christ. The evil itself becomes not less evil, but less in comparison with the power of good where the soul dwells.

Fragment: Pride

Pride is the greatest of all evils that beset us, and of all our enemies it is that which dies the slowest and hardest..... God hates pride above all things, because it gives to man the place that belongs to Him who is above, exalted over all. Pride intercepts communion with God, and draws down His chastisement, for " God resists the proud."

Fragment: Restoration

To be truly restored the Christian must recognize the point of departure where his soul gave up communion with God and sought its own will.... Communion with God is not thoroughly re-established, self and its will are not thoroughly broken, as long as the Christian has not found the point where his heart began to lose its spiritual sensibility, for the presence of God makes us feel that.

Fragment: Samson

Samson was one separated to God, sanctified for Jehovah... his hair was not to be cut. While the commandment and precept were observed, his strength was with him. There might have seemed little connection between long or uncut hair and all-overcoming strength; but God was in it: and an obeyed, honored God is a God of strength to us.

Fragment: "See If There Be Any Wicked Way in Me"

Our prayers, our praises and our services are so poor and worthless, and yet we are proud of them. We seek praise from our fellowmen for the very things we have to confess as tainted with sin before God. What need, therefore, to bare our hearts and say, " See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

The Glories of the Cross

If God be righteous, and judges sin, can He exercise love to us in all its fullness-towards us who are sinners? Now here it is the death and atonement of Christ come in. The blessed Lord willingly undertook this task, to glorify God perfectly, and prove infinite love to us, and yet maintain God's perfect righteousness. He bore our sins-was made sin for us. He drank the bitter cup of death and judgment which our sins had filled. He gave Himself for us, and was bruised for our iniquities, and wounded for our transgressions. Was not this love? Oh! reader, was it not? Yet there God's righteous judgment against sin was fully maintained, so that what I see there was not the least allowance of it. What could show it like the death of the Son of God when He was made sin for us? Could He not be spared? How then can any, persevering in rejecting mercy through Him? Was it possible this cup could pass unless He drank it? It could not. For whom then shall it, if not drunk by Him?

And see how the notion of mere dying under the hands of wicked men destroys all the glory of the cross. I read, Christ gave Himself, offered up Himself. Here I find the holy perfectness of His own soul in a way that nothing else shows. What love! What devotedness! What giving Himself up to the Father's glory! "No man taketh it from me," says He, "but I lay it down of myself." (John 10:18.) "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment, even so I do." (John 14:30, 31.) You will say, How could this glorify His Father-to give Himself up to a cruel death and wrath? Because of your sins: they made it necessary. If love was to be shown to you, it must be in this way; God's holiness must be maintained-the impossibility of allowing sin. You (if indeed through grace you believe) are not to be taken away from before Him, because of your sins and defilement. Instead of that, as they could not be allowed, they were taken away, that you might be in peace before Him and know this God of love. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.)

And see how the cross glorifies God in everything. If I look at it as a sacrifice for sin, as Christ giving Himself up, that God may be fully glorified. And how glorious Christ Himself is there, by His doing it! For, remember, if it was indeed a bitter cup, yet Christ never was so glorified as there. Never was His glorious perfection so shown out; so that, though it may seem a hard task to impose on Him, yet it really was, as to His work, His greatest glory: as He says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." (John 13:31.) For it was a glorious thing to Him who accomplished it, that, so to speak, God should be debtor for His glory to Him who thus gave Himself. For indeed it was a common counsel between the Father and the Son, God's will was He should come, and His will was to come. "Lo, I come to do thy will."

But see how He was glorified in it. Is God righteous in judgment against sin? The cross has fully shown it forth. Is God perfect love to the poor sinner? The cross has shown it forth. Did the majesty of God require that it should be vindicated against rebellious sin? The cross has done it; yet the sinner is spared. Is God truth, and has said that death should follow sin, the devil saying,

as he yet does, it should not? Where such a witness that it must, as when the blessed Son of God died as man on the cross? Yet He has obtained for us life by it, beyond all the power of death and judgment. Were our sins pressing upon us, so that we did not dare look up? They are gone. I can see God in the light without fear: He has proved His love, and I can enjoy His love. And just when man showed his hatred to God in slaying His Son, God has shown His love to man in giving Him to put away the sin shown in slaying Him. Where was obedience shown as on the cross? He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Phil. 2:8.) Where love to us? Where the desire to glorify His Father? Thus the Son of man was glorified, and God, in every part of His nature, glorified in Him: His love, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, all displayed.

And what is the consequence? The power and fear of death are gone, for the believer. It is but the entrance into paradise for him. The sins that he feared, as bringing judgment, are taken away and blotted out. He knows God loves him-so loves him that He has not spared His own Son to save him; he knows that He has nothing to impute to him, for Christ has borne all. God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins.

And yet, is sin a light thing to one who has this perfect peace with the God of love? It has cost the death of the Son of God. True, it is put away; he is justified; he has perfect peace with God. But how? By that which makes sin the most frightful thing, to his soul, that possibly could be; and knits his heart to Jesus, who was willing to suffer thus to put it away.

Whether we think of God's glory, or Christ's glory, or the practical effect on our hearts, it is Christ's cross, as being a real sacrifice for sin, that is really efficacious. It glorifies God, infinitely, honors Christ, and perfectly blesses man; telling him he is the object of God's infinite love, and yet maintaining righteousness in his heart. Jesus was God manifest in the flesh; and, as to His Person, supremely glorious in dignity. This indeed enabled Him to do such a work; but never, as to His work and service, was He so glorious as He was upon the cross. I speak to you feebly, beloved reader; but is it not the truth-words, as Paul says, of truth and soberness? And this thing was not done in a corner.

And now mark too the blessed efficacy of it for me, a poor sinner. There stood sin, death, judgment, just wrath, in my way. My conscience told me it was so, and God's word plainly declares it. Satan's power bound it down, so to speak, upon my soul; while his temptations encouraged me to go on in what led to it. God's law, even, did but make the matter worse for me, if I pretended to meddle with it; for its holiness condemned my transgressions. And now, for him that believes, all is taken out of the way. Sin gone, death gone as the terrible thing I awaited (Christ has turned it into a gain)-I shall be with Christ; judgment, Christ has borne it; wrath, there is none for me: I am assured of perfect love. Christ, in making me partaker of the efficacy of His death, has set me beyond all these things in the light, as God is in the light (having loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood, and made me a king and priest to God and His Father). In rising, He has shown me this new place into which He has brought me; though as yet, of course, I have it only by faith and participation in that life, in the power of which He has risen. Yes, dear reader, the believer is saved, he has eternal life, he is justified; he waits, no doubt, to be glorified, but he knows Him who has obtained it all for him, and that He is able to keep that which he has committed unto Him until that day.

There is a judgment (terrible it will be to them that have despised mercy and rejected the Savior); but to those who, as poor sinners, have submitted to God's righteousness, believing in His love, "Christ will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. (Heb. 9:28.) That is, having quite put sin away for them the first time, He will come the second time without having anything to say to it as to them, for their full possession of the glorious result. As He said Himself, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2, 3.) That is a judgment, if such you will call it, which shall be the everlasting and infinite joy of them that share in it.

Weigh that passage I quoted just now. Christ has appeared "once in the end of the world... to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment"- there is the natural portion of the sinner-"so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. 9:26-28.) The first time He came, He bore the sins; the second, He comes apart from that for the full salvation of them that look for Him.

Reader, are you prepared to give up all this for the notion that He fell a victim to self-seeking men who put Him to a violent death? Did He not offer Himself up as a sacrifice to put away sin? Did not the Lord bruise Him? Did He not say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46.) Does not your soul need to have sin put away? Is not the love of God shown in the way you need it, by Christ's being thus given? Has He not glorified God in it? Has He not been glorified in it and by it, bitter as it was? Is it not peace to know He has done it, and put away sin for us by it? Does not the word so present it to us? The Lord give you to believe it in truth. It has given me peace, perfect, yet increasing peace, these five-and-twenty years, while He has all the glory; and I know God is love, who has purged my conscience from sin. May you, dear reader, be enabled so to know it, and with as much joy! If you do, you know what I say is true. May the grace of God make Him, who has wrought it for us, more precious to us both! It is a blessing and a joy to think we shall have an eternity in which to praise Him for it.

Even if I think of the way good and evil were brought out by it, there is nothing like the cross. Everything moral is there brought to a glorious center, from which it flows down on every poor believing heart, in the proof that evil has been met and put away, and that good has triumphed. Where has death been shown in its terrible power as in the cross? Where has sin, in all its terrible character and effects? Where do I see man's hatred against goodness itself, and the Son of God bearing sin before God, yet where was eternal life obtained for us, such as death can never touch? Where were goodness and love displayed as there? Where were righteousness and obedience accomplished in spite of all? Where was sin brought so immediately under God's eye and punished, as there? Yet where was it put away, and His perfect delight in absolute obedience at all cost, so drawn out? Where was the bowing in weakness under death shown as in Him whose soul was melted like wax in the midst of His bowels? Yet where the divine strength which carried Him through all that weakness, death, man's hatred, Satan's power, and God's wrath, could accumulate on His head who drank that bitter cup? All this is told us in scripture. "He was crucified through weakness." (2 Cor. 13:4.) "This is your hour and the power of darkness," said the Lord. (Luke 22:53.) "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26:38.) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46.)

In a word, would I know what sin is? I look there; righteousness? I look there; hatred without a cause? I look there; love without bounds? I look there; judgment and condemnation of sin? I look there; deliverance and peace? I look there; divine wrath against evil? I look there; perfect divine favor and delight in what infinitely glorified God? I look there. Weakness and death, though willingly bowing under it? It is there; strength, divine, which has met and removed evil? It is there; peace and wrath? It is there also: the world under Satan's power rising up, to get finally rid of a God of love; and God, by this very act, delivering the world and making peace by the blood of His own Son. As it is said, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14, 15.) As I have said, good and evil in all their extremes and forms meet there for the triumph of love in once suffering the evil, that good may have its full force.

Do you ask, reader, Why then are we in such a world still? I will tell you. Scripture tells us, God in grace is still leading souls to profit by and enjoy this. It is a world of misery, and sorrow, and oppression. Did God interfere to change it, He must come in judgment and close the time of mercy; and that He does not do, while yet any have ears to hear. He allows, therefore, the evil which He will judge, to go on meanwhile. And we, though we may thus have to suffer awhile in the world, ought in this sense to rejoice that it is yet allowed; because it is still a time of mercy extended to others. The end will be everlasting joy in a much better world. Christ is gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again and take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Thus Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9.)

Finally, my reader, you may not have, in peace of soul, been able to contemplate all the glory of the cross. You have a blessed portion yet before you; but remember, it is presented to you, just as you are, for your need in all the grace of it towards a poor sinner. It meets you in your sins, if it infinitely glorifies God. A Jesus dying on the cross for the vilest meets the wants and burdens of the vilest-comes home through grace to his heart. If his sins are a burden to him, he may see Christ bearing them, that he may be free and have peace. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) "And by him, all that believe are justified from all things." (Acts 13:39.) Were his "sins as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." (Isa. 1:18.) If you are heavy laden, come to Him who came in love to give you rest, and has died in love for you.

The Lord's peace be with you, dear reader-be with you, whoever you may be. May you be washed in that blood which cleanses from all sin, and the Lord will preserve you for His heavenly kingdom.

An Address on John 14

IT is remarkable the pains the Lord takes to give us the I sense of the way He has associated Himself with us and us with Himself; and how His heart goes out that our hearts may believe in His love, that He is interested in us and in our being with Him. In His rejection His heart would not rest and be satisfied unless He felt they had the consciousness of being associated with Himself.

The history of the Gospels is the history of His Person passing through this world, that would not have Him if He was that Person. Then He labors to persuade His own that He cares perfectly and completely for them-that He labors for them, and cannot be satisfied without having them with Himself.

When they came to Peter and said, " Doth not your Master pay tribute? " as a good Jew, Peter says " Yes." Jesus says, " Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children or of strangers? " Peter says, " Of strangers." Jesus replies, " Then are the children free notwithstanding lest we should offend them... take and give unto them, for Me and thee." We get the Lord showing Divine knowledge and Divine power, yet putting Peter along with Him. His own Person is always guarded but they were both children (Matt. 17:24-27).

So at John's baptism; in the first step of the remnant, the Lord takes it with them, and man's place is shown in the one Man, upon whom consequent upon what He was in Himself, heaven must open. It is the first time you get the whole Trinity brought out, the moment He has taken His place man amongst men.

Then man has to overcome Satan and He says, "I must go there too." (Matt. 4:1-10),

Then you get man's place shown out in glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses and Elias are in the glory talking familiarly together. There again His Person is guarded-they disappear. " This is my beloved Son, hear Him." You get Him being this Divine Person whether in the lowliest place, or in the heavenly glory, but always bringing His disciples into the same.

So in John 20, Who was it that was told the highest position that can be thought of? Who was the vessel of the revelation to minister it? Not the Apostles, but Mary Magdalene. Attached to Christ's grave she cannot leave it. If she had not Him she had nothing. She gets the revelation and communicates it to the Apostles. You will find always through Scripture, that where there are those who cling to His Person, there divinely given knowledge is found. If you want to know keep close to Christ. It was not in order to know that John was so close to Him (John 13): he was there before.

Divine affections are connected with the work of the Lord, who had been thus drawing out their hearts to cling to Himself, and was now going away. They were troubled. The thing that He takes up still, is their having to part with Him. He was going to the Father. " Very well, I cannot give you up-I must make you fit to be with Me." " He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself.

After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet." " If I cannot be with you, you must be with Me, and I cannot have a spot in heaven." They were clean " through the word I have spoken unto you." But He cannot have them picking up dirt on the road, He must wash them. He became a Servant when He became a Man. Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end, that is out and out-right through. He will gird Himself and make them sit down to meat and will come forth and serve them even in glory. He makes Himself Minister of the blessing. His heart is not colder there than here, and this makes it doubly blessed to us. If my mother gives me a trifle I would not part with it for the world. There is not a joy we shall have in heavenly things that Christ will not give. He never ceases to be a Man nor to have Divine love in His heart.

In the first three Gospels Christ is presented to the world to be received, but this is not so with John. In chapter 1. the world knew Him not-His own received Him not. Therefore you find electing grace in John. Chapter 8 is the rejection of His word; chapter 9 of His work: chapter 10. " I will have my sheep in spite of all." Having been finally rejected in word and work you get Him owned in all the characters He was entitled to. Chapter 11, as Son of God in the resurrection of Lazarus: chapter 12, riding on an ass into Jerusalem as a testimony that He was Son of David. God took care that He should have that. Then Greeks come up desiring to see Him, and He says, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified." But if He takes this larger, fuller place He must die. " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

In chapter 14, it is what He tells them for their comfort while He is away. First, He is coming back again. Ye believe in God as an object of faith, believe also in Me. In My Father's house there are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I will come to receive you to Myself. I cannot stay with you, but I am not going to be alone up there; there are many mansions, I will come to receive you.

In consequence of that you get two quite distinct things. First the object before the disciples-what they ought to have known then: second what they could not know until later. He does not leave us ignorant of the blessedness He is going to bring us into. " I am going to the Father." They say " whither goest Thou, we do not know the way." " Why I am going to the Father, and you have seen the Father in Me! " If I am sending my child anywhere, the great point is what the person is there. So the Father was where He was going.

" Show us the Father." " You have seen the Father in Me and you have got it all." They knew where He was going because they had seen the Father in Him. They knew the way because they had found the Father through Him.

We know Christ shall see of the fruit and travail of His soul; that is an immense joy. What does He desire for the saint now? To be as like Him as possible. Then there will not be a thing in us to jar with Christ's heart. Still the essence of the blessedness is that it is the Father's house and we know Who is there. They had seen the Father revealed in Him that they might know where He was going. It shows the immense importance of the Person of the Lord Jesus. When the Christian sees Him he knows the blessedness of where He is going quite well.

Thus we get the object already before them, and if they really loved Him they would prove it by keeping His commandments.

He then goes to the second part of the christian blessedness. (verse 16). As I have got the object in the revelation of the Father and the Son, I now get the Comforter from the Father to give me this association with Christ, "at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." It is not merely the Father and the Son as in the first part, but now they learn another thing, that He who is gone to Heaven is in the Father, and that the Father has sent the Comforter to make them know that they are in Him and He in them. Thus I get the Christian's state consequent on the coming of the Holy Ghost. Thus I get sure blessedness -divinely given certainty of our place in Christ. I know that I am in Christ who is there, and I know Christ is in me here. It is not a question of hope, but the Holy Ghost is dwelling in us.

There is no thought of the world receiving the Holy Ghost. The world ought to have received Christ. The world did see Christ and ought to have known Him. The Holy Ghost is not in the world to be received as Christ was. The world cannot receive Him; it never says they cannot receive Christ. The Holy Ghost comes and is the seal of believers called out of the world to be a peculiar people. He belongs to and is known of believers only. He is not like the first Comforter. Christ was there and could not be in them. He was with them but had to go away. The Holy Ghost is in us, and stays with us. Christ was amongst them here, but not in them. He was absolutely alone in that sense -most accessible, affable, but alone. This other Comforter stays here, abides with us and in us. It is a thing that is only known by having it; but the effect of having it is that I know I am in Christ. He gives the consciousness of being in Christ. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. On the other side we know Christ is in us. Thus we get our full complete blessedness before God on one side, and the measure of our practical responsibility down here on the other. I am accepted in the Beloved; I have got a new place-not in the flesh at all. Responsibility as a child of Adam is completely and entirely over-not as a Christian, but as a man. There is none righteous no not one. I do not want the day of judgment to tell me what I am. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost. It is not a state of probation. Man has plenty of debts and not a farthing. You come and tell me how to conduct myself, but I have nothing to live on. My standing and responsibility is that of a child of God, in Christ not in the flesh. Christ has answered for my sins not in the first man but in the second; the debts are all cleared. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. There is the blessed place I am in. The sealing of the Holy Ghost comes at the recognition of the grace of the forgiveness of sins. There we are white as snow. The Holy Ghost says " I will dwell in that man." God cannot seal an unbeliever, He seals a believer. It is a blessed place, high above angels. When once I believe that the Son of God became a Man and died for me, glory is only a natural consequence. Nothing is too good for us; all the rest is easy to believe.

The other side of that is where Christian responsibility begins. Saved, in Christ, sealed with the Holy Ghost, there is no responsibility; I could not get into a better place in heaven. But if that is true another thing is true: if I am in Christ, Christ is in me down here, and I say, now let Him be seen. Conflict is consequent upon that. The Lord does not enter into conflict with Satan for us, till He takes His place. My place is settled in Christ and my duties are settled by Christ being in me. It is not a question of what I am doing, but of Christ being in me. I am to manifest the life of Jesus and nothing else: it requires watchfulness and diligence. I ought to walk as He walked. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. What is the obedience of Christ? He never had a will of His own. The Father's will was the source of all He did. In Matt. 4. Satan said, " If thou be the Son of

God command." "Nay I came to obey and serve-not to command-I have no word out of God's mouth." The obedience of Christ was having God's will as the origin and motive of all He did, not only the rule. " If I am a Son I do not depart from the place of a servant." That is the way Satan was perfectly silenced. There is no harm in eating when hungry. " Mary shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He can do nothing without that word, and Satan can do nothing.

It is Christ who is our life dwelling in us, that life living " by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If I had a direction telling me all I ought to do, it would not do. I want to know His will to test my state. If God has not a will I am to do nothing. But it needs spirituality to discern His will-" filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." When I am uncertain, there is something that hinders, and I detect it. If the eye is single the whole body is full of light. As I get then the full blessedness of being in Christ, so I get Christ in me. That brings on the present dealing and government of God with us in this path. " If ye love me keep my commandments." " He that bath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me... and I will love him and manifest myself to him." We get the positive enjoyment of the place; and that does depend upon the conduct-the place does not. " Grieve not the Spirit of God." If I grieve Him He grieves me, and the effect of the Spirit's presence in me is to make me unhappy -- conscious of having grieved Him if in disobedience. Some people are afraid of commandments; I am not. If I did everything right, and it was not obedience, I should have done nothing right. Commandment brings in authority and therefore I like it. He adds " If a man love me He will keep my words." There must be obedience. He leads me in the path.

All responsibility comes from the place I am in. The relationship that exists is the ground and measure of the duty. Every responsibility in conduct flows from the place a man is in. Am I child forever; does that take away my duty? On the contrary it makes it forever.

Two things remain in the chapter. " Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." See the manner of Christ's giving. " My "-that gives it its character. It is not the way the world gives. It sometimes gives generously, but it gives away. Christ brings us into the same place with Himself. What He gives He does not give away, but with Himself. " The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you." He brings us into all blessedness in Himself.

There is one other thing-the most wonderful thing in the Scripture, because it shows how He looks for the heart to cling to Him. " If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father." It is as though He said, " You will be thinking of my happiness." What a place to put us into! What a thing to be expecting from us! Have your hearts that thought of Christ, so bringing us into enjoyment of all He has Himself, and expecting us to be interested in His happiness? Do you believe this?

What I feel is that if you get the consciousness of the blessed privilege of being in Christ before God, that cannot be true without His being in you.

Notes of Readings - John 14

IN the previous chapter the Lord tells them He was going away; here He tells them what would be their comfort-He went to prepare a place for them-He would bring them to the same place as Himself-He would come for them Himself, not send for them. To be conformed to the image of His Son, that is the end of all knowledge. God's purpose was to give me a place with the Son: He is the first born among many brethren. He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one-one set-that is the key of all blessings.

Q. Verse 7. How does He mean " they would have known the Father "-not in relationship?

A. No, not in relationship till the Holy Ghost came; but He was then the revelation of the Father; purity, holiness, love, all that the Father is, was manifested in Him; and He was going to the Father, so they knew where, and they knew the way, for He was the way. The moment the Son was there, the name of the Father was revealed. God has come out in Christ; when God does come out, it is the Father revealed in the Son.

There are four names by which God revealed Himself. To Abraham it was " God Almighty," to Israel as " Jehovah;" " Most High," in the millennium; to us, " the Father " revealed in the Son.

" This is the hidden wisdom ordained before the world unto our glory," not revealed before, but God has revealed it unto us by His Spirit. The revelation is by the Holy Ghost-the words by which the revelation is communicated-and it is still the Holy Ghost who works to make me know it.

You do not get the Father in Hebrews; you get the priesthood, we do not get all the privileges, but you can go in, no hindrance to your going (Heb. 9:8; 10:19); but it is God's throne, not the Father's.

John 17:21, 22. The world will know it when we appear in glory, but we know it now, though the treasure is in a poor earthen vessel.

Q. But our apprehension of it does not depend on natural intelligence?

A. No, it is spiritually discerned.

Q. Then, as it is by divine power, there is no limit to what we may have, or to what we may enter into?

A. No, only we do not get it all at once, but what we learn makes us capable of getting more.

Q. When He says (chap. xiv. 18), " I will come to you," does He mean by the Spirit?

A. No, that is Christ Himself. (Ver. 20.) He does not say here, " the Father in me;" that had been while He was on earth, but in that day which was coming, they should know another thing-" I in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." The Father had been revealed in Him-they were dull-but the thing was there for them. They never once understood what He said, never on any occasion; when they said they did (chap. xvi.), they only proved they did not; they said, " Now speakest thou

plainly.... by this we believe that thou tamest out from God;" but they dropped " the Father:" the Lord responds, " Do ye now believe?"

We have the Spirit to enable us to understand -I in the Father, not He revealed in me. When the Spirit is come, I know that Christ is in me and I in Him; and that gives me everything.

Q. Is there an intended difference between " abide in " and being " in " ?

A. It is as a consequence of verse 16 that it is said, " He in me." We get in Acts 1; 2 what was a great comfort to me; that the Holy Ghost was in Christ after His resurrection-we shall have the Holy Ghost forever in us. He is always working. We find Him so working in creation. " By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens;" and there is a remarkable verse in Hag. 2:5-in Christ's miracles, and always.

Q. Is not the Holy Ghost's work now to bring us (the church) to Christ?

A. The Holy Ghost is like a steamship, with a power to surmount hindrances; not dependent on the wind like a sailing vessel. There are difficulties and hindrances by the way, which He has to surmount; but when He has brought us to heaven, there is nothing to do, but to unfold to us what is there.

Christ never glorified Himself; He says, " Father, glorify thou me." He even gets the Holy Ghost for us "from the Father."

" Ye in me " brings us into all that He has received. " Not as the world giveth;" the world gives and consequently possesses no longer, but Christ gives by bringing us into all that He has as Man.

" That I am in my Father " introduces me to heavenly things; they ought to have known the Father in Him down here, but now we know Him in the Father. I am then a son as He is. When on earth, He always spoke of God as " My Father;" when made sin it is " My God;" afterward it is as God and Father, but it is also, " My God and your God, my Father and your Father."

In the epistles we get constantly " the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

" Because ye are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father;" we have the Father's love and Christ's; but, besides, we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son.

Q. And that is true Christianity?

A. Yes, Christianity is heavenly; everything will be gathered up under one Head, in heaven and on earth. We have the heavenly place" blessed in heavenly places."

Q. How few have really got that?

A. They have not got into it, but it is theirs. Many stop at being clear from the first Adam-the debt paid-but they do not get hold of being put into the second Adam.

Every one brought into glory is glory to Christ, and I have to rejoice in His glory, not merely that I am glorified.

The love of the Father is the spring and center of the new creation.

The spirit of the world is opposed to the spirit of Christ. I have one thing to desire-to please Christ here, to walk as He walked.

Another thing we get is God's rest. He would have us enjoying it; you do not find rest here. If you find a very happy meeting, you may be sure the devil will try and spoil it-there is no rest here.

Q. How do you understand verse 23?

A. If we get into their abode, they make us their abode. " If a man love me," &c.; all in this part of John is conditional. We ought to realize these things. It is from the lack of obedience there is lack of joy.

There are two things in verse 21; He that " hath " and keepeth." Having His commandments is one mark of the obedient child; a careless child will not know them. It is a wonderful thing to know we are in Christ and Christ in us now.

Knowing what He has brought me into is another thing from knowing what He has brought me out of.

Further on we get another thing-peace; not merely peace of conscience, though we get that, but Christ's peace, the peace He had when walking through the world.

Q. Would that be the same as the " peace of God " in Phil. 4?

A. No, the peace of God is another thing; nothing can trouble God's peace, but the thought here is that Christ's peace fills my heart, walking through a scene where disturbing things are.

And how the blessed Lord reckons on our hearts entering into His joy! " If ye loved me, ye would rejoice." If you are thinking of yourselves, you will not, but He counts on our hearts.

" At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me, and I in you." We are one with Him. If I am in Christ, then Christ is in me. He appears in the presence of God for you; you ought to appear in the presence of the world for Him.

It does not say, You " shall be " the epistle of Christ, but, Ye " are;" that is our responsibility, but it is not connected with our acceptance.

You cannot make yourself my child, though you may be ever so childlike, you must be in the place first. We are the epistles of Christ.

The Lord give us to know our obligation to the One who loved us in the common things of life.

Notes of Readings - Luke 15

We sometimes think we ought to be this, or we ought to be that. This is the pride of man's heart.

There is sovereign grace for the vilest. It is all true we have sinned, we know that we do not love our neighbor as ourselves. The law was no sooner given, than the golden calf was made, and it was broken.

You may talk of politics, of anything, everything, in any kind of society, but bring in Christ-" there is no beauty that we should desire him." Man showed the climax of his wickedness when he crucified Christ. God has shown His love where we showed our hatred. I say, " My sins brought Him there." Here I get righteousness against sin, and love to man. I find Man in all His perfectness on the cross.

The third parable is most important to unite them all. The first two, God seeking sinners; in the last, the grace that receives them-love and goodness triumphant over all. Who is the happy person in the first? " The shepherd." And who in the second? " The woman;" and in the third, " the father." We do not get the value of the third parable without the first two.

The shepherd shows love and care for the sheep; he puts it on his shoulders. I have no doubt the shepherd is a type of Christ; the second parable, of the work of the Holy Ghost; the third, " reception " by the Father. We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. We find the Lord constantly laboring to persuade the disciples of it. Do we believe the Father loves us as He loves Jesus?

The first two parables are the grace and love that sought. But, beloved, who put it into God's heart? There is not a joy in heaven that we have not got now. I know I have got Christ, and that I have the Holy Spirit. We have been washed from our sins. Everything a poor feeble thing wants, we have got-the Father's love, the Son's love. " Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."

There is nothing in heaven that is not the portion of the believer now-nothing that the heart of God can give, but what we have. Nothing can go beyond " the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus."

Whenever God is pleased to reveal Himself, we get two things-light and love. Man loved darkness rather than light. When God reveals Himself in Christ, it awakens the conscience, and there is a sense of His goodness-it was so with Peter when he got a net full of fishes, and he prostrates himself before Christ. The prodigal starts off, but there is as yet no real revelation of God; he is going to say, " make me one of thy hired servants." He is right so far, but he does not know God. When he does come, he confesses his sins: " I have sinned," &c., but the very first thing before he is received in the house, the father is on his neck, kissing him, and he has not even confessed to the father yet. Now he says, " I am no more worthy to be called thy son." The father answers, " Bring forth the best robe." That is salvation; I have got an absolute proof of God's love to me. "

God commendeth his love towards us." He has given His blessed Son, a token of His infinite love. Is the Person that bore my sins still on the cross? No; He is at the right hand of God. The work that saves me was done outside me; I find I had no part in it. " By one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

He finished the question of salvation the first time He came. The more we think of the cross, the more we shall find that there is nothing like it through all eternity.

Everything in good and evil was brought to an issue there.

In the first two parables, there is the grace that seeks; and in the third, the grace that receives. It is a very different thing to be converted,

and to be saved. Conversion is the conscience awakened, but not purged. The prodigal was converted when he thought of going to his father, but he was still in the far country, starving; even when the father met him, he was in his rags. When the best robe was put on him, he was saved; he was not fit for the house till then, could not have gone in till he had the best robe-Christ.

Conversion is, that I see goodness in God, and sin in myself; I see that He is good, but that I am not fit for Him. Like Peter, when he says, " Depart from me."

The prodigal son was converted when in famine. He said, " I will arise," but he has not an idea of the love that was in his father's heart till he met him. Then we hear no more about the prodigal son, except what was done for him.

There is not a joy in heaven that we have not got now, except the glorified body. We hear no more of the prodigal's thoughts or feelings, once he gets to the father. After that, all we get is the expression of the father's love, and his joy. Of course, the prodigal had joy too, but we do not hear about it.

The eldest son, the self-righteous man, has no part in the joy, he would not go in, although the father entreated him; thoroughly selfish, he had not a thought about his brother. It is' the Jew,

the one who had the promise. In that sense all was his, but he only wanted to make merry with his friends-no heart to enter into the father's joy over the restored one.

Philippians 2

WE get here how the Lord humbled Himself, and associated us with Himself according to the counsels of God.

The Deity of the Lord Jesus is the basis of everything for our souls. Without it God could not be known to us. Who could leave His place but a Divine Person? I say that because I desire this evening to speak of His humanity, that brings Him specially near to our souls, and enables Him to associate us with Himself. It is His human place I speak of. It inspires our hearts with confidence. " In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily " -that is the reality of humanity. " Though he were a soli yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered " (Heb. 5:8). He understands it all as having gone through it. He never gives up the place in which He has associated us with Himself. He has set Himself apart in the glory that all that is divine may be presented to us in a Man-in Christ-and thus win the affections. He never gives it up nor will give it up.

There are several other passages to which I desire to refer, to show the reality of His having become a Man. But first I refer to verses 12 and 13, because they present a difficulty to some. " Work out your own salvation" is often taken as contrasting our work with God's. It is a simple blunder. They had lost the Apostle, now they must do for themselves, If they had lost Paul, had they lost God? No: that is just what they had not. It is our part in contrast with Paul's, not in contrast with God. The effect is to produce in Christians exactly the character of Christ. Verses 14 to 16 are word for word a description of what Christ was in this world. We are set to be practically what Christ was in it.

Now I turn to speak of the humiliation. Just by meditating on what He is we become like Him. The great starting point of all this wonderful truth is Prov. 8, where Christ is spoken of as the wisdom and power of God before the world was. Before ever the world existed it was man, not angels, that was His delight and the object of the testimony of His grace in redemption. The delight-predilection of God (speaking reverently)-was in man.

All that God is morally has been brought out in redemption-holiness, majesty, love. " It became God... to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." Now that was first expressed in incarnation. The redemption work was necessary to bring us into the enjoyment of it. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Perfect love was there in the presence of perfect evil-that which is not in heaven. There is no evil to bring out patience there. We can therefore follow Him step by step and learn God: thus only angels can see Him. There is spiritual power by grace to contemplate and feed upon it. God prepares the body for Him, and He says, in free love, " Lo I come to do Thy will O God."

Now I turn to Luke 2 It is sweet to see the perfect unjealous glorifying of God in these angelic and holy beings. All Christian doctrines are facts, so that the simplest can understand better than the wisest because he does not reason about it. " Glory to God in the highest, peace upon earth, good pleasure in man." Heaven itself is celebrating this wonderful thing that is proved by Christ

becoming a Man. If you go to an inn it is a kind of epitome of the world: they look at you, scan you, and assign you your place. There was no place for Christ. He began in the manger and finished on the Cross, and had nowhere to lay His head all the way along. The moment He takes that place, man can deal with God so to speak, and refuse Him any place. In the end of the chapter the Lord was in perfect submission -Son of God-but entirely subject. He does nothing at all until called out-what a lesson for us (verse 51).

In Matt. 3 we see Him take this public place. He was that " Holy thing " born of the virgin Mary, called the Son of God. God was changing everything, bringing God and man face to face. It was not a law to see how man could stand before Him at a future day of judgment, but God come to man as he is. God comes as a present thing in the heart and conscience. God and man are thus face to face whenever a soul is converted. Just as I am God meets me-perfect light showing me what I am-and then all perfectly settled. And it is perfect grace.

It is no question of the law here-they were condemned already. The kingdom was going to be set up, and the people go to be baptized of John in Jordan confessing their sins. " Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him." He needed no repentance. I trust I need not say that here, yet He does go there doing His Father's will. "Suffer it to be so now,

for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." He enters by the door taking His place among those in whose hearts God's Spirit and Word had wrought. At the first step He says, I must go with them. Then man is put into his proper place. I am speaking of Christ now. Redemption was needed to put us into it. The way it was shown that His delight was with the sons of men, was by His Son going there. The Lord came thus among these godly ones, and heaven is opened. Four times we find heaven opened. Here He comes among these poor things, who, when God came claiming good, had only the confession of none. The Father owns Him as Son, and the Holy Ghost seals and anoints Him. It is a wonderful passage bringing out the whole Trinity. The Son is there. The Holy Ghost descends upon Him in the form of a dove. The Father's voice is heard; and all brought out in connection with the Son become a Man, taking man's place according to the thoughts of God's delight. Redemption was needed to put us into it. By it He can say, I have brought you into my own place.

I get the sweet and blessed truth there of His coming there as Man, taking man's place according to God. What is the next step? We have first His place, ours with the Father and God. Is there no other place? In the world I mean? Yes: with the devil. Perfect obedience has brought Him where sin brought us (Matt. 4:1). We have to do with Satan, Christ makes our place: as to all the difficulties of our path, He puts Himself into them and passes through them " in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He meets Satan as we have to meet him, only Satan is overcome now. The first two temptations are the wiles of Satan, the third is open iniquity. Let me say a few words on the details. There is no harm in taking food when hungry: but Satan comes to tempt Him to command. He says I came to obey. That is the obedience we are sanctified to. Did He have His own will and God stop Him in it? Never! Here when everything depended on it-when He was in all the sorrows of the wilderness-for the Son of God a single word was sufficient, and for the devil too. The power and authority of the Word of God was shown when everything depended upon it. There is another thing, confidence in order to obey. That was where Eve failed. " Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Tempting is distrusting Him; people say it is when you are trusting Him too

much! There is entire confidence to enable me to do His will. The last thing was the world (verse 8). The devil shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Alas, a little thing often turns off our hearts. He makes our place with the Father, and gives us next the power of our path with Satan, and in the world, serving us as love delights to serve (selfishness wants to be served). You might say that is all over now that He is in glory. John 13 shows us the contrary. He had been with them in gracious love and condescension, He is going back, as the unsullied One, to the Father getting all things into His hands, but do not think He has given up serving you. With all His glory in sight, just going out to the Father He says, " I cannot stay down here with you in the world, I will not give you up, but I must make you fit to have a part with Me where I am going. You are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you, but you will be picking up dirt by the way; that will not do for heaven." When it comes to communion I cannot have an idle thought in my heart that does not hinder it. He washes our feet. That is His present service for us in glory. It was not because Peter repented that Christ interceded, but because Christ interceded that Peter repented. There is no excuse for defiled feet. There is not one of us that does not fail here, and the type of the Red Heifer figures it. Your failure gave Christ the Cross. That is what makes sin so horrid. There was only one place where He was alone when He had become a Man-the Cross.

Philippians 3

This epistle gives us two practical characteristics of Christian life in which we find the true practical power of the life-the principle on which it passes through the world according to the mind of God. The Epistle is not doctrinal but, in it, we get the Christian path-Christian experience in the power of the Spirit of God. There is not a word about sin in it from beginning to end: but it sets out the Christian path in a person walking in the power of the Spirit.

The first characteristic is lowliness as in chapter 2: the second, the energy that leads a soul on, with Christ in glory as its object. This is the whole power. The basis of the whole thing is, that Christ is in the glory as man. It is a wondrous truth, that man-that is, the Lord Jesus Christ-is gone into heaven on the accomplishment of that work on the ground of which man could go in, hence as our Forerunner; and that the place that man has thus got in Christ is what the Holy Ghost always sets before our minds as our object.

All the great truths of God are found centered in the cross. Seeing a man in heaven sets man aside on the earth. We have got to pass through the world till Christ comes, and the question is how we walk down here till then. Of some the Apostle tells us weeping. We are looking for Christ to change our vile bodies. Till then we are not in the full result. That is what is set before our minds; but Christ is presented as already set down at the right hand of God, the distinct testimony of our accomplished salvation, and the blessing into which it brings.

Our calling is heavenly. Nothing is more important than our distinct apprehension that our calling is to be with Christ and like Christ where He is now. There is a full definite revelation of it all now. It is not merely that we are cleared of sin, but that God has a purpose about us which forms the object of the running here. " For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." The Cross was the turning point between that which tested man's responsibility down here and God's purpose concerning us. Before the world was, God had this purpose about believers, to have us there like His Son (Prov. 8). God, according to this purpose, would have us in this glory with His Son-the personal dignity of the Lord being always kept safe. You never find the saints said to be brought into this glory, without the guarding of His perfect excellency. The heart delights in preserving it.

Let me refer to one or two instances. In Matt. 3 Christ took His part with the remnant-going with His people in their first right step. Never till then was the heaven opened. At this moment the heaven was opened unto Him, and the Spirit of God came down, and the voice of the Father declared, This Man is My beloved Son. Now heaven was just as much open to Stephen: but mark the difference. When the heaven is opened over Christ, does He look up and see an object that changes Him into the same image? Not at all; heaven looks down upon Him. But this is just what Stephen does. Thus His person is kept safe, while Stephen gets as like Christ as the creature can.

So on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias appear in just the same glory as Christ; but the moment Peter would put them all together on the same level, they go away. He remains-the

voice again declaring, " This is my beloved Son, hear him."

But to return to these thoughts of God about us, in Matt. 3 Having put man into his proper place there is for the first time the revelation of the Trinity. There, where the fact of God's Son taking His place as Man sets man into his proper place before God, all three Persons are revealed in connection with it. The more we enter into the thoughts God had about us, the more we see what poor worms we are. How could we ever have thought of being brought into this same glory as the fruit of His redemption? It shows how it is all grace, " That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus."

He brings these things before our souls now that our affections may be formed by them in living association with Him where He is. We want to walk through this world with our affections flowing from our connection, as new men, with the second Man, that is Heir of all, in heaven. He connects us with the Man that is there-Christ in heaven-the only accepted Man according to the counsels of God-by the Holy Ghost. God did not begin with the Man of His counsels; He gave promise of it in Eden, and it -becomes clearer and clearer afterward. He began with the responsible Adam. All that probationary system is closed, in the setting aside of the old things altogether in the Cross. It closed the connection between God and the flesh, in spite of all that man- infidel and religious-can do to make something of it. That makes all the difference in our position. Now I have a fallen man-each of us adding our own sins to the heap-and a glorified Man. Am I walking on the principle of the fallen man, or the heavenly Man? I cannot do both. To walk as the heavenly Man is full blessed liberty of soul. The Cross made Christ say, " Now is the judgment of this world," but Christ then said, " Now is the prince of this world cast out." God did that work on the Cross; while men slew Him, it was " by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." It was the triumph of Divine love, that through Christ's work the counsels of God might be accomplished that put us into the same glory as Christ. The counsels were never brought out while that probationary system was going on, because the foundation for them was not laid. But the counsel " is now made manifest " (2 Tim. 1:10: Titus 1:3). Hence we read, in 1 Cor. 2:7, " We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery... ordained before the world unto our glory," but it did not come out. Again " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." People stop there, saying it is so wonderful and blessed we cannot know it. It is just the opposite, " God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit... that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God." Then we have three steps as to the revelation of these things. First revelation: second, the inspired communication of them: third the spiritual reception; and this founded on a perfectly complete work. A Man has entered into the glory as our Forerunner, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. There is a difference between having our debts paid, and having all this glory before us. We might have our debts cleared and be without a farthing, but God gives us besides an inheritance of glory.

In John 13 Jesus said, " Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him, if God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself." He does not wait for the royal manifested glory. The Holy Ghost comes down and puts us into connection with Christ in the glory of God, and the things that are around Him. That is the Christian position.

What becomes then of man's righteousness, if you are made the righteousness of God in Christ? The Cross puts an end to it altogether. It was just the attempt to maintain the legal righteousness

that led Paul once to persecute the saints, and afterward became his whole toil and burthen to oppose. The continual effort is to build up the first man again-in bold infidelity-but even in the Christian too. Whatever there is of it is a hindrance to the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross has judged it all, broken down the whole thing, " He takes away the first that He may establish the second." We get it here, " We are the circumcision which... rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh."

What is confidence in the flesh? A very easy but a very foolish thing. It is the religion of the flesh, In verses 5 and 6 you get all that man was under the law. Who established it? God. Why then speak of it in this way? Because under that system they had crucified His Son. " If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin... now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father," The Jews had promises and Christ was the fulfiller of them: He had come and they would not have Him, and the Jews were shut up in unbelief that they might come in under pure mercy just as the Gentiles.

Religion of the flesh is still man's confidence, because we do not know that we have no power, and we try to make out righteousness for God, instead of seeing God has made it out for us in a new way in a Man in glory. The Cross was the end of the trial of religion with man, to see if there was any good in him. But people say, " Ought I not to walk in this way?" You ought to have done it, but you are guilty under that system.

Here we have the religiousness of the flesh (not sin) which he calls concision-a name of utter contempt. That was the grosser thing, that was first set aside. But now he comes to " all things " and counts them loss for Christ. " That which was gain to me," that was the secret of it. If he was learned, who had the credit of it? Righteous-to whose credit was this? Paul's; but he says, I will not have "me." There is a totally new thing that God has set up-a Man in the glory of God as my righteousness, and the Spirit of God makes Him the object of my affections. " I am crucified with Christ... 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." "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people." What my heart wants is to have the Christ that has done it, in glory. " For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." He says, "There is God's intention about me, now, in the settled certainty of that, I want Him in the glory as my object." Here he is speaking of what carries the heart on. The object of a man is what characterizes him: if money, then he is covetous; if pleasure, then he is a man of pleasure; if power, then he is ambitious: he who follows after Christ is a Christian. Christ is the power and principle of his life here. Paul was walking down here but he had no other object in the world than to win Christ. Christ had laid hold of him to have him in the glory, and he wants to lay hold of that. What governs the Christian in his path is the Cross written on all down here, and Christ up there as the object.

" Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law." He does not say " Not having his sins," but his righteousness. Christ has obtained the glory. The law would have been his righteousness down here; but doing what I ought to do would never give a title to be in the same glory as the Son of God. Why should it? But he will not have his own righteousness, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

" That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death " (verse 10). It is not that we are to seek suffering, but the cross was before him and he says " I will only be more like Christ; I have a life in Christ that is beyond death." As he says in 2 Cor. 5 " We are always confident, knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." His place is all a settled thing: if killed he will only be with Christ. But he has not got it: it is his object.

He sets aside all that man is. The flesh, take it in all its best show and colors, is all legal righteousness-fleshly righteousness. All is set aside.

Another thing has come in-not making the first man righteous, but-substituting the second Man for him.

His first object was to get Christ Himself; afterward his own part in the blessing. Christ takes up the active open enemy against God. Not content to stop at home, like the chief priests, Paul goes to strange cities persecuting the saints, and then God stops him in sovereign grace, with a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, If it is a question of laboring for Christ, there will be different results; but if of glory, it is true of all saints as of Paul, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. If you believe in Him, He has obtained it for you.

Then he looks at that glory. If it costs him his life, that is what he wants-" having a desire to depart and to be with Christ." There is no uncertainty. Cost what it will going through this hostile world- if it cost him his life-he says, " Well, I will be more like Christ," and he will have the conformity of His sufferings.

He was a man of one thought, one object, one purpose -" This one thing I do." All gain to him is loss, "I have suffered the loss of all things," but " I do count them but dung." Not " I did count," but " I do count."

It had not lost its present power. Do we count everything but loss for Christ? In Matt. 25 there is time left between the cry "Behold the Bridegroom" and the coming, to test the heart to see if Christ is everything. If we look around how often people talk of losing first love. It is that Christ has lost His first power over the heart. The world comes in in such a subtle way-and the things of it-and deadens the heart. The consequence is we begin at last to judge after the atmosphere we are living in. When Christ fills the heart the temptations are not there. It is the power of this new Object.

I turn now to what is connected with that, what Paul calls the perfect Christian. The thing set out before us is to be like Christ in glory. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, according to the eternal counsels of God. We are not that yet. " He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." That supposes that the heart has understood this-not merely that my sins are put away, forgiven, but my place in Christ. Rom. 5 and 8 give the contrast; " if any man be in Christ " is the new place I have got into. Not my sins blotted out-that is the first thing-but, " he is a new creation," belonging to this new world. This is what the Apostle earnestly insists on. I am not a debtor to the flesh-there speaking of its sinfulness. The point of that is " crucified with Christ," not Christ crucified for my sins merely, but I am a dead man. He takes this truth of our being crucified to put our hearts, and consequently our lives, where we are not in body yet-in complete association with the Man that is in heaven. The old man has been condemned. If I know my place then I put off the old man and put on the new. Where do I get the measure of it? " Which

after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Besides sins put away the cross of Christ has separated us from our existence in the flesh, sin, the world, and law; and risen with Christ, I have my place in life, and heart, and spirit, along with Christ, who has redeemed me to Himself in glory. " Our conversation is in heaven."

I add another thing; the same Spirit that dwells in Christ, dwells in us. People talk of being united by faith, Scripture never does. We get the Spirit and then we know that we are in Him and He in us. The soul gets hold of this by grace, and my part, my portion, and my place is with the Son of God, the second Man and not the first. The Cross closed the whole system of righteousness by law. I died and now belong, as having Christ as my life, to the place where He is; and the Spirit is given that I may know it. " Our conversation is in heaven." What am I waiting for? For Christ to come and put me there, every day seeking to be more like Him here.

You find a Christian first converted knows his sins forgiven. But if you want to be a Christian as God contemplates it, you are in the world but not of it as He is not, you are in Christ. That is the reason why God puts us constantly through trials and difficulties, that God may make all this real to our souls. "Always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body."

" For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:... who mind earthly things." The Cross has put entire contempt upon them. If I look for the glory of God, where do I find divine dealing with sin, infinite divine love? In the Cross. That is what has put an end on God's part to everything connected with man-pretension to righteousness, recoverableness, everything, save the body left to be the vessel of the manifestation of the life of Christ.

"Our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." We are left here like the man with the legion of devils, sent to his friends that they might know what great things the Lord had done for him. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, to do the one thing that remains to be done, to change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then all will be complete. He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied then.

Christ has come and given Himself for us that He might purify us to Himself. The Cross was the test of infinite love. And what we have to look for is that love of Christ to come and take us to Himself. If a Christian understands that he is done with the old man, he has learn to grow up to the stature of Christ. There is no other full growth of the Christian but that. As to mind and faith he gets into the full grown state. The thing is to be attained in glory, we cannot say we have attained, but can we say "This one thing I do." If a man has only seen forgiveness yesterday he has got to walk according to the same rule. To be forgiven and know it, is blessed of course; but can you say you are doing one thing?

People talk a deal about perfection, but they have lost the sense that perfection is to be as Christ in glory.

Can you say that your citizenship is in heaven, your righteousness in Christ, the associations of your heart with Christ, everything there? Infidelity is stalking abroad, ritualism is in high places. Can you say I have no confidence in the flesh? Divine righteousness is in heaven, but the Cross has written death upon all below upon earth, and all association with it. We find our imperfection

every day, but is the ruling object of our souls Christ? Are you looking for Christ? You cannot say when He will come. It is carefully not revealed, to keep you watching. But whenever the Lord speaks of it, He never puts it beyond the life of the people that were then living. He never presents another thing to their thoughts. In the parable of the virgins, those that awoke at the midnight cry were the same that fell asleep while He tarried. He wakes them up and then He comes, but stays sufficient time to test hearts as to how far He is everything. If He were to come to-night, would your hearts be saying, Oh that is what I am looking for? Do you love His appearing? Would it be the joy of your heart to say, " Oh there He is, and I am to spend eternity in the glory with Him "? You cannot expect joy unless you are looking for the Lord to come. The Cross put an end to all fleshly religion, and earthly things, and Christ becomes the bright blessed Object: while the love of Christ lays hold of, sustains, and comforts the heart, and gives us the consciousness that nothing can separate us from it.

The Epistle to the Philippians - Chapter 1

IN the Epistle to the Philippians there is not much doctrine, but Christian experience as it ought to be in the power of the Spirit of God-as it was in fact in Paul's case. You never get the working of the flesh or the word sin in the Epistle, but the operation of the Spirit of God leading the saint to walk in the Spirit. All through it is the working of the Spirit in varied aspects of Christian life.

Chapter 1. The general character of Christian life in the presence of life and death.

Chapter 2. The likeness to Christ in graciousness of walk.

Chapter 3. The energy of Christian life that carries Paul through circumstances.

Chapter 4. The entire superiority to all circumstances. Paul had a thorn in the flesh at the very time; so it was not absence of flesh, but walking in the power of the Spirit.

Verse 1. Office was local, not so gift. Order is gone and it is a mercy it is, in one sense, because else I should have to recognize the clergy and all the corruption. Man always spoils at the outset what God sets up. All will be set up in Christ, the second Man, that failed in the first, in all its various forms and shapes.

Verse 6. Personal dependence on the Lord to carry on the work.

Verses 9-11. Paul was not content merely that the Philippians should do no wrong, but that they should have spiritual discernment as to the best thing to do, namely to glorify Christ. The fruit of righteousness is the expression of the life of Christ, not merely the natural consequences of the life but its manifestation. The day of Christ brings Christ more personally before us than the day of the Lord.

Verse 18. You find things that are done in the spirit of evil that you can rejoice in, though you cannot go with them (cf Luke 9:49).

Verse 19. Nothing is looked at as accomplished in the Epistle. All our blessings in Christ are looked at as at the end. Paul looks at the Christian as running the race, therefore it is not doctrine. I have eternal life, but it is looked at as the end. Satan seems to have got the victory as to the Apostle, but he says "this shall turn to my salvation." I have got righteousness but it is not displayed except in glory. The consequence of Israel being delivered from Egypt was that it brought them into the wilderness. There I am dependent but have the comfort of God's faithfulness. I am held in infallible safety, but have to be held-kept by the power of God, but need to be kept, and would not come to a good end if I were not. I need grace every minute, though not more safe when in heaven. For the race you find the "ifs." He will perfect, but He needs to perfect and I to be perfected-a constant action on the part of God. So Israel in Deut. 8 God was not uncertain what He was about, but putting them into and through all the exercises, and when they came to the end they found that God had been thinking of everything for them. They had not been thinking of it by the way, but it was all "to do thee good at thy latter end."

Verse 28. Satan in the darkness and opposition to the truth. We are apt to be cowed by the power of evil. Where there is boldness it is the ruin of the adversaries; they have got in collision with the power of God, not of poor man. It is a question between God and Satan. The instruments of Satan are cowed (cf Josh. 2:9-24). The man four years in prison, chained to a soldier, encourages those who were not in prison. It is not when the trial is there that we suffer the most, where there is faith; but when we are expecting and looking at it: when in it we look out of it at God. If we do not lean on God the enemy can have his own way and run after us.

The Epistle to the Philippians - Chapter 2

Chapters 2 and 3, present the two sides of Christian life. The graciousness that makes me thoughtful of others, and the energy that enables me to run on through the world without caring for it. In one Christ is presented as coming down and you are to come down like Him, in the other Christ is gone up and I am to go up after Him.

Verse 3. This is not possible if I took at the bare hard fact, but quite possible in Christ. I see the flesh in myself and Christ in my brother. Compare 1 Cor. 1:4-9 with the rest of the Epistle. He begins to blame them for everything, but he sees all the good first, and rests in the good, and then blames them, without vexation, in love. It is a great test of nearness to Christ. It needs to live with Him and learn oneself there. The flesh mixes itself up with so much of our judgment of evil, and we get vexed with it. Self jostles against another man's self. Now if I think of what Christ thinks of that person all this is put down. Near Christ there is lowliness of heart and we see our own wretchedness and good-for-nothingness. " Things of others" are things which God has given.

Verses 6-9. The last Adam is presented in contrast with the first. Adam set up by robbery to be as God. He who was in the form of God humbled Himself down to death below the creature. Adam exalted himself and is abased. Christ humbled Himself and is exalted. Satan's temptation was, " If thou be the Son of God command." "No," he says, "I will not keep out of the place of service, I came to obey." He left the glory as to state not as to nature.

Verse 12, 13. "Your own salvation" is often quoted as if it was in contrast with God's, but it is in contrast with Paul. Paul worked for you, God works in you. The path of obedience is that in which salvation is wrought. God works in them the willing and the doing.

Verses 14-16. The effect is the life of Christ completely expressed. Every member of the sentence is just what Christ was in the world.

Verse 17. Paul looks at himself as the libation. They were the main thing, he only poured out on them-his death the accompaniment of the sacrifice. (cf. for the sacrifice Rom. 15:16). The great thing was that Christ should have His people; if Paul suffered for it, it was all right.

There is no hardness in the Christian or in Christ. When it is the service of God and faithfulness we must not regard father or mother. The Lord sent His mother away whenever she came to Him in His service. It is not the destruction of natural affection, but superiority of Christ-God coining in or else it is idolatry. If I get honey when I am fighting the Philistines it lightens the eyes. I get refreshment by the way, but I cannot put honey in the sacrifice. The moment it becomes an object it is not allowed.

Verse 29. " Receive him... in the Lord." It brings in Christ, into the kindly relationships. You do not get this in the Old Testament-divine life brought into the circumstances of human life.

The Epistle to the Philippians - Chapter 3

What is called holiness is generally righteousness. For acceptance righteousness is wanted, not holiness. Righteousness looks at meeting every claim of the relationships in which we are. Holiness is the activity of the nature in its own delights, or the abhorrence of evil. There is the new nature in us, but no nature can exist without an object. Our own righteousness and law go together, the righteousness of God and faith. The two parts of righteousness are, first Christ died to clear away my sins (Romans; second, that in which God has His glory (Rom. 8). The position is never fully brought out until the first man is cleared away; then I find myself in the Second before God. In Corinthians the aspect of righteousness is higher than in Romans because more connected with the counsels of God. What Paul looks for, as an object, is what forms him now. If we were risen what would trouble be? He is looking for a condition in which he will have done with the whole thing. Instead of suffering being a terror to him, it was only making him more like Christ, You could not kill a dead man (2 Cor. 1:9). He would be nearer being raised from the dead when he was dead than when alive. Christ's resurrection had set aside the power of death. Verse 10 presents power along the road; verse 11, future resurrection. The power is not the object. It is present attainment by future resurrection-a thing already accomplished in Christ. It is resurrection from among the dead: there is no attainment at all in the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection from among the dead is the resurrection of those in whom God has the same delight as He has in Christ-it is the expression of it. That they without us should not be made perfect proves that the Old Testament saints are included in it (Heb. 11:40).

Two things Paul was running after, to be with Christ, and to be like Christ.

There are three classes in the chapter. First the perfect Christian who is not stopping short of being raised like Christ in glory. Second, real Christians but in the imperfect state of not having got hold of this. They rest in the work of Christ, they love Him, but have not got the power of the calling on high. Third, those who bear the name of Christ but are not His at all.

The Epistle to the Philippians - Chapter 4

The last chapter presents superiority to circumstances and the Lord proved sufficient.

Verse 6. The request might be foolish. The answer is not promised, but the peace that God is in to keep our hearts. Nothing disturbs the throne of God. Thus free my heart can be occupied with what suits God -the bright and blessed things of His own presence,

The Epistle to the Philippians

In Philippians we get the experience of the Christian, 1 but no allusion to sin. All the out-goings of the heart- Christ. There is no " if " as to being in Christ, but plenty of " ifs " the moment we get Christ in us. Caleb and Joshua were sustained as examples of the power of faith in the wilderness; that is Philippians, God sustaining in grace where there was only weakness. The wilderness is the production of Christ's life in the circumstances of this life. Canaan is the power of Christ introducing us into spiritual conflict with the power of Satan. Holiness is as needed for one as the other, for the words said to Moses at the bush are repeated to Joshua in the Land (cf Ex. 3:5, and Josh. 5:15).

The epistle to the Philippians is a pattern of christian experience as it ought to be: the power of the Spirit of God leading in the path of God amid the manifold trials of the path-heavy trials of Christians getting on badly-all seeking their own. But faith cannot be hindered by circumstances in its link with God, nor, therefore, in thoughtful service for men, suited though it might be to the need around. The character of Christ, giving up self, is just what is needed for this.

Chapter 3, presents the energy of divine life connected with a Christ gone up as Man on high. Chapter ii., presents what forms our character down here-Christ came down. The two together give us the display of divine life in us. In one, Paul is on the way to glory and all else is dross and dung-there is no difficulty in giving that up. I may have a very good cloak in a race, but if I want to run I throw it off. What I get in the other gives me Christ as the object, imparting the mind of Christ, giving up self. If not given up-judged and got rid of-it impedes. The grace without the energy would be human sentiment; the energy without the grace would be stoicism.

The terms of the exhortation in chapter 2:14-16, tell us that what Christ was, we are to be. It is the power in the midst of the reign of evil. It is not the reign of good now. The failure of man was always uniform and immediate, but no failure can break the link of faith with the power of God. The darkest circumstances brighten the light; a candle is nothing in the day, it is seen for miles in the night. Dark times become the times for the manifestation of faith.

It is a great thing to have the right thing, but it is blessed and needed to have the mind of God to carry out the right. Now, if self is at work, this is hindered. See the Apostle's grace in chapter 2. 1 and 2, the mind of Christ is the perfect model of this. Does our energy take the form of a servant? It may be of faith, and with a true heart, but does it take the place of service?

The blessedness in glory is not simply blessedness, but Christ ministering to it. By abiding in Him we get His mind-self nowhere. The man that is walking in Christ is occupied with Him, and sees Christ in his brother, and all the ugliness of self in himself, so he finds it easy to esteem each better than himself. Just because of love the parent sees all the good qualities of his child. The power of good in the midst of evil is learned in the coming down of Christ from the glory to the cross.

Mark another character of the life-obedience (2:8). There is nothing so humble and unselfish as obedience, because self does not work at all. The Word forms this: we live by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. There is no truth in the world, but in the Word of God. Christian obedience is not being stopped in a will of our own, but in having no will-God in His Word guiding the new nature.

Chapter 2:12. The contrast is between Paul's work and God's work in the Christian. No deprivation of Apostolic power will stop obedience by God's working in us-only then there is called for more earnestness and seriousness, for Paul was a mighty warrior.

Salvation is the result in glory. Salvation is never looked at as simple redemption, but as the result in glory and blessing. We are subjects of the conflict between God and Satan. What a serious position! Which would you like, Christ's place, i.e., no place; or honor and position in the world?

Verses 15 and 16 describe exactly what Christ was-that is the Christian.

Notes of Private Conversation

Q. Should it be, " Since ye then are risen with Christ "?

A. Yes.

Q. It does not mean any doubt, does it?

A. No; just as I should say to you, if you are a Scotchman, I hope you will honor your country.

Peter is afraid to walk on the water when he saw the storm, but had it been smooth he could not have walked any better.

To me it is a wonderful thing, far more wonderful than the glory, that the Father loves me as He loves Jesus. The Lord was constantly laboring to persuade the disciples,

that they were loved as He Himself was loved. The tribute money was an instance of this. People think it was tribute to Caesar it was the tribute for the temple. They ask Peter, Is your Master a good Jew? " Oh, yes," says Peter-he was always ready to say something, you know; but we find the Lord is beforehand with Peter. He asks, " Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute?" We are the children of the great king of the temple. Then He says, Take the fish that first comes up, you will find in it two didrachmi, that take and give unto them for me and for thee.

What amazing condescension, to put Peter along with Himself!

Q. Is chastening always on account of evil? A. No; it is often to prevent evil. Paul had a thorn in the flesh to prevent evil.

I feel sure christian life is not what it ought to be. It will be seen in the end there was nothing else worth living for but Christ.

The Lord takes care of people. The Lord's work goes on in spite of all; man's thoughts and ways cross each other, but the Lord goes through all.

Q. What does that mean, the devil disputing about the body of Moses, in Jude?

A. Well, I suppose it was lest it should prove an object of superstition to the Jews, like the brazen serpent. We do not find that in the word, it is just my mind about it. The Jews might have made pilgrimages to it. The Lord buried him, and " no man," &c.

It is impossible for a man to understand God; we are so constituted, that when we see things, we at once see that some one made it. Tell a man in the country that nobody made his wagon, he would look out an asylum for you. We know there is a cause for everything, we cannot understand anything to exist that was not made. It is impossible for us to know God, we are only finite, He is infinite. If I can know God, He is not God, and I am not a man.

Q. What does that mean, that the disciples should not go over the cities of Judah till the Son of man come?

A. They have not gone over them yet. They were prevented by judgment.

The destruction of Jerusalem, you know, came in.

The Rest, the Word, and the Priesthood

We get three things spoken of here: one that we have not got, and two that we have.

The thing we have not got is rest: There remaineth a rest for the people of God. The prophet says, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." (Mic. 2:10.) We are partakers of the divine nature, and we must rest where He rests.

The other two things are the word of God and the priesthood of Christ. Also I wish, in speaking of this help by the way, to refer to that in which all is absolute perfection, to show the difference between our standing before God, and that which is a help more for infirmity than for sin. We have to learn-if we have not yet learned-the place in which we are set through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first exercises of the heart do not come in in this portion at all, those which we have when we do not know our place, when we try to do good, and do it not; but that is not the path of the people of God as such. It may be the way into it, but the place of the Christian is in perfect acceptance before God, with every question of sin perfectly settled. Just as with Israel: they were delivered from the place they were in, God's judgment met by the blood upon the doorpost, and they brought through the Red Sea to Himself: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Ex. 19:4.) That is where the Christian is; the veil is rent, and we are now before God without any veil at all, though it may be on our hearts through unbelief. I do not speak of that now.

As far as God's government goes, all are in relationship with Him, but I speak now of the relations of the heart. Every possible trial of man has been made, and it only came out that those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Christ has been rejected, and the world has no place before God at all, though His love goes out towards it, for He has had His purpose and thought of grace ever since Adam fell, and souls get into a place in which they are in relationship with God. We have to see where we are, when the whole world is lying in wickedness. Men own Christ outwardly, that He died on the cross, etc., and go on just as they did before. You cannot call that relationship -there is none.

There remains a rest even for God's people, just as Israel were journeying on to Canaan; they cannot have rest in a world which is contrary to Christ. We are exercised in the wilderness, we are in conflict, too, with wicked spirits in heavenly places; and that is not rest. Israel will get their rest in time; but I drop that for the moment, and apply it to ourselves. It is a blessed thought, that there will be rest and joy for this poor sin-stricken world, but for us it is a heavenly rest-we are blessed in heavenly places in Christ.

Where God can rest in His love, we can rest. If God rests in His love, there is nothing wanting. He is active now in His love, seeking to save that which was lost; but that is not rest; He rests in His love when those whom He has brought by His love are there, and no single thing is lacking to their enjoyment. It is ours, that rest, but we are not there yet. Christ is waiting too, He does not yet see the full result of the travail of His soul, but He will do so, and be satisfied. That rest, of course, is

according to God's nature. He brings us now, "holy and without blame, before him in love," having the adoption of children, knowing God as our Father, and the blessed rest of God's people is also according to His nature. And it is all revealed now, the veil is rent, and all that is revealed which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. The Father fully revealed in the Son, the essence of all the blessing. The more spiritual we become, the more we learn what it all is. We get the figures of it in Revelation, where the spiritual apprehension lays hold of it, so that we can live in it, but it is clear we have not come to it.

It is a mistake to speak of this rest as rest of conscience. "We that have believed do enter into rest" only means the character of those who enter; as I might say, Men come in by this door, and women by that. I do not say that any are coming in now. We have rest in the sense of ceasing from our own works for righteousness, but not in the heavenly sense.

But then, beloved friends, all has been completely brought out now-they are not promises, the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared. The work is all completely finished and revealed. The moment the Son of God was rejected, all that could be done to test man's heart had been done, and He says, "Now is the judgment of this world." For when Christ was there, in perfect love and goodness, revealing the Father, He had to say, "The world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." He appeals to the righteous Father to judge between them.

We get Man then-Christ in the divine glory, because He had finished the work His Father gave Him to do: there, when He had finished it, and because He had finished it. And Paul says he did not know the Christ who came to be Messiah among the Jews; they had forfeited all the promises, and it was all over with Jew and Gentile, and there was no relationship that God recognized at all. Man was cast out of the first paradise, but was set in Christ in the heavenly paradise, and between the two there is nothing really that God owns. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 John 5:19.) Satan was the prince of the world before, but he was never called it until the cross, where the world proved what it was: it was not a question of the responsibility of man, but the proof that he is. enmity against God, and that he will not have Him on any terms. But in that, God wrought His own work, the work He had always had in His mind before the foundation of the world, and as the fruit of which, Christ is in heaven. (Of course, He always was there, but I speak now of Christ as Man.)

The more we dwell upon it, the more we shall see the whole question of good and evil definitively settled at the cross. The perfect wickedness of man was fully brought out there; the disciples run away, and all the rest were delighting in getting rid of the Lord, saying, Aha! Aha! so would we have it.

We get here, man entirely rejecting the Lord, and that is what we are ourselves, our natural state. On the other hand, when the wickedness of man's heart is brought out, then I get man perfect (in Christ, of course), absolute obedience at all cost, even to the cup and the curse, perfect love to the Father: "that the world may know that I love the Father, even so I do." That love was shown really and perfectly where He was made sin. I get man in His perfectness here, glorifying God at all cost: God revealed in His Majesty-He could not let His own Son be spared when He had put Himself in that place - His judgment against sin, the thought of which made the Lord sweat great drops of blood; and all this was done for us: He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. Morally speaking, the whole question of good and evil was resolved: Satan's power, the

wickedness of man, the perfection of Man, and the nature of God 'all fully brought out. It is not now a question of probation, but of belief in a thing that is so settled, that God has set the One who did it at His own right hand. He was perfectly glorified in the place where Christ was made sin, and Man is sitting at the right hand of God in glory. It is all done, and that is what the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal to us.

Exercises of heart there will be, finding out what we are, that in our flesh dwells no good thing-that we are the very persons who were thus manifested at the cross; but I find, too, that being one of those persons, and having that evil nature, it was all met at the cross-a settled thing. He would not have the twelve legions of angels, He went on to the end. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

When, beloved friends, I have been thoroughly convinced of sin and sins, I find then, when I get before God in the full conviction of what I am, I get Christ instead of myself; He is before God for me. Not that all the sin is nothing, but that Christ has borne it all for me; God has accepted it as meeting it completely and absolutely, not giving me a legal righteousness-it is infinitely beyond that-but giving me a place in glory, in virtue of the work which has perfectly glorified God. I do not believe we get the sense of that until we have done with all confidence in self; it is a very subtle thing. A man does not set about saying there is something in him to trust, but he goes on as if there were, and he will not get that liberty spoken of in Rom. 7

I am utterly condemned, and taking my place under the righteous judgment of God, I find Christ is not on the cross now. He is sitting at the right hand of God, after He has been on the cross. All I was as a child of Adam is done away, and I am sanctified by the will of God, "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." He is sitting there at rest, because He has finished the work. (I do not speak now of the grace He is daily ministering to us.)

If I am looking for anything to put away my sins, I do not believe in the finished work of Christ, and therefore the apostle says, in Heb. 9, "then must Christ often have suffered." There is not a thing to be done; but it is done-"no more conscience of sins." It is not that I do not fail, but when I look up to God, faith cannot have a thought that God imputes anything to me. And why so? Because Christ is sitting at the right hand of God when He had purged our sins.

If I go in faith, I go through the rent veil-His flesh-into the holiest of all, in boldness, because He who has accomplished the work is there. I find Him there when I go. I press that, beloved friends; because you are not on the full, true ground of liberty before God, until the thought of imputation, when you put yourselves in the presence of God, has completely disappeared. It is well to put yourselves there to test your souls. Supposing I stand before the judgment seat. Why, the One who is there is the One who bore my sins! I see it more every day, that the whole question of the church's ruin hangs upon this; whether or not the worshipers once purged have no more conscience of sins. People speak of Christ bearing their past sins, but there is no sense in saying Christ bore my sins up to the 16th of July! He was there before God meeting the whole question of sin, and He sits down because it is all settled. God has made death and judgment, like the Red Sea, to be a wall on my right hand and my left.

What, then, comes of our present life? The first thing to get quite clear is, that my place before God is Christ's place every instant. "No condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." How can you

condemn one who is in Christ? It is absurd, and the apostle says it triumphantly.

But what do we get as to what is going on now? It is not a question of imputation at all, but we have to do with the same Christ who is the perfect Witness to God's satisfaction.

I am here, a poor weak creature, exposed to all sorts of snares and temptations, and we have the word of God, sharper than a two-edged sword, which comes and judges; it runs right through, and says, What is this in your heart? Is that in accordance with the light? No buts, no buts, there is no excuse, you are brought into the light. It shows me things I never suspected before—all things naked and open; the word is God's eye; prying into my heart, and showing me what suits that eye, judging not merely acts, but the thoughts and intents of the heart.

But, supposing all the thoughts and intents of my heart were as perfect as possible, still I am a poor weak creature, and then I get the Priesthood of Christ. There are snares all around—the world, Christian friends who are not spiritually-minded—and I have to go through all that, all the difficulty and trial that comes from those who do not wish the cross to be quite what it is. We are in danger in passing through this world, and so I have Christ, who has met every difficulty and temptation, and ten thousand times more than we do, and understands it all, not only in the divine, but also in the experimental, way. But for the evil movements of my heart, I want the hatchet: for the difficulties, trials, etc., I have the throne of grace—God Himself, the perfect and adequate supply of all grace to overcome.

The Priesthood of Christ does not apply to sins. Many a one who does not quite know that he is perfected forever, if he gets into a low state, goes to Christ, just as if he could not go to God. I have a High Priest there, and I go to the throne of grace; it is for help in time of need, not for sin.

If you go to Christ about your sins, as if He were to go about them to God, that is not what He does as Priest. The Priest is to obtain grace for me, that I should not sin; He is always there to obtain every needed grace, to help in time of need. It is impossible that a temptation can be too strong for us, for He is faithful not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, and we have all the strength of God. We go to the throne of grace, and get what is needed to help in time of need.

The epistle never connects the priesthood with sin; it is well you should feel it, that you may not think you may sin, and then run to the Priest to get it set straight. But supposing I fail, and sin (which we all do), then I have an Advocate with the Father; it is not then going to God to get grace and strength, but that fellowship with the Father must be restored. Fellowship is interrupted if I even allow a sinful thought; it were blasphemy to say He could have fellowship with that. I go, then, not doubting His love, but not cheerful and happy as if nothing had happened; while the righteousness in which I stand is not touched, communion is destroyed. If I allow anything that is not of God, communion is interrupted: and "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father;" that is about our sins. But mark how he speaks, that there may be no cloud—"Jesus Christ, the righteous." Why bring in that word? Because our righteousness is not touched, it all remains in unalterable value.

But it has brought me, too, to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and after communion is broken, He interferes to restore it. If I look at the sins as interrupting my standing before God, Christ is not my righteousness, but the effect of His work is to put me into the light, there to judge of everything, as He does; there is no other place for a man except that of being in his sins.

The moment there is anything inconsistent with the presence of God, in the measure in which I release it, communion is interrupted. Then do I go out of the position of grace? Not at all. He interferes to break me down about my sin, to make me judge the root, the place where I got away from the path. My soul has to go through the judgment of all that, and there I do get the question of sin raised, but then it is as Advocate with the Father.

If I think of the Priesthood, I am before God perfected forever. But though this is true, I am a poor weak creature going through the wilderness and there is infinite strength for me, and He is my Priest, representing me before God. We never can excuse ourselves if we fail, because He is faithful. There may be negligence, and we may not have power at the time to overcome; negligence in prayer, and in using the means God has given, but I never can excuse myself.

Have your hearts right open before God. Do not leave any chambers locked up before Him, or you cannot have joy and liberty. You may walk well outwardly, not scandalize anybody, but if you have anything in your heart not open before God, you have lost your communion, and there is that which tends to weaken your whole path.

There are two things: the full and distinct apprehension that before God there is no more conscience of sin: if you have not reached it, never rest till you do: He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. Here comes the fact that we are poor, weak, infirm creatures, and we are put through all sorts of things to exercise us; and He is my Priest where the intention is right. I have to have my will broken, things I do not suspect brought out, and, even if I fail, the advocacy of Christ is founded on His righteousness, and in that there is no progress, and no change.

I press upon you distinctly and definitely-for the loss of it was the very ruin of the church-and for your own souls, not to rest till you have no more conscience of sins. Then, not only watchfulness against evil, but growing up unto Him in all things. But there is no perfectness till we are like Him in glory. I press toward the mark.

The Lord give us diligence and earnestness of heart thus to follow Christ!

What Is the Church? and in What Sense Is It Now in Ruin? on the Epistle to the Ephesians

QUESTION asked. What is the church, and in what sense is it now in ruin?

J. N. D. There is, dear brethren, great importance in the subject we are about to enter upon, and I feel that the Lord is particularly gracious to us at this time. It is very certain He is always so, whether we apprehend it or not, but He manifests His power in working in the midst of His people. It is not that I am unconscious of the trials and difficulties of "brethren," but at the same time I do discern the Lord's hand at work, and it is ever cheering to see this, for when He takes anything in hand, the soul that trusts Him is sure to get blessing, because He is ever working for our good, though He may sift and humble us. I see that some of the saints are brought more than ever to value their position, and if asked as to this would say, Yes. In this I see positive blessing. I see there is flesh (and the sifting in many cases will manifest it) but still blessing, and this is a comfort to those who know how to trust God.

Assuredly there is failure, great failure, but our failure does not close the eye to the fact that God is working. It is true the world has crept in among us; I admit it; but I do not dwell upon it now, but when God begins to work there must be blessing, although, of course, when the Lord stirs up the pool a little of the mud will appear, because it is there.

Many dear brethren have been troubled at the expression "the ruin of the church"; now I can quite understand this, and I make no complaint about their jealousy lest it should be thought that the church could fail, because in one sense it is impossible that the church can be ruined; but there is confusion in some minds between the purposes of God, and present dispensation in which man is placed under responsibility. In speaking of the ruin of the church, we speak of it as down here, set to manifest Christ's glory in unity on the earth, and we must remember that there we are placed, and as in this responsibility, there we must stay. If it could fail spiritually it would be disastrous indeed! There are two thoughts respecting the church in ruin which are full of mischief. The thought on some brethren's minds is, that we intend by this the interruption of God's purpose, which evidently cannot be. There is a jealousy, which I respect and for which I have no regret, lest the idea of the church in ruin should seem to affect the purpose of God. As regards the purpose of God the church cannot be ruined, but as regards its actual present condition as a testimony for God on earth it is in ruin. The other thought is: Well, suppose it is in ruin, so it must be; there we are and there we must stay; so that we are saved at last, never mind; we will take no thought about the present condition of the church, being satisfied that we are saved from the wrath to come. This listlessness and hanging down of the hands, causing cessation of all spiritual energy, is induced by a want of apprehension of what the church is in God's sight. But practically many saints think they are to remain content in the ruin. There is danger in taking up such a thought, because it would be the denial of the power of God. To unbelief discouragement may be the result of this idea of the church's ruin, but I do not look at it as discouragement, because I believe the grace and power of the Lord is suited to the need of the church such as it is at all times. I should

feel it to be a very sad effect if the expression " ruin of the church " were to dishearten a soul about the operation of the Spirit in bringing blessing to the church. Neither of the suppositions I have alluded to can be proved, for it is impossible that the church can be in utter ruin in the sense of upsetting God's purpose, or that the power of the Lord is enfeebled when there is actual present ruin. His working will be according to the state the church is in, not to the state she is not in. We are all liable from the feebleness of our minds to say too much or too little, even where truth is held. Man is in a sad state, and I should get disheartened unless I saw the power of Christ to meet that state. God's purpose, of course, is unailing, and therefore it is not true that the church can fail as it exists in God's purpose. What we want is not so much an abstract notion that the church will be saved, but real practical faith in the application of the resources of God to meet present circumstances. If a Christian is in a bad state, and I do not look beyond it to Christ I am troubled, but if I do I have confidence, and in that sense I am at rest, because I know the Lord can and will bring it right by His power working for him. I should feel sorry if seeing failure should enfeeble faith as to the Lord's care of the church, and I have felt the danger of this; still I say He introduces blessing according to the present condition of the church. We must not say, if we are looking for blessing in the path of faith, the church is sure to be brought through according to God's purpose of grace, it would produce listlessness; we have to look to the present working of His power in blessing to glorify Christ. God always takes an interest in the church's circumstances, and if we are looking for blessing, we shall find it even in times of the greatest failure, for God will have His church in glory, and living faith sees not only the need, but sees also the thoughts and mind of the Lord about that need, and counts on the present love of the Lord. It is as true of an individual as of the church. As having the Spirit of Christ I cannot rest in the thought that a Christian is secure in Christ, and therefore not endeavor to instruct and exhort him and lead him on. The church will be saved, and so will every member of it; but if I have the affections of Christ, I cannot be contented unless I see the power of the Spirit in any individual saint manifesting that saint's relationship to Christ, and just so is it with the church of God; if my faith is in exercise, I am not satisfied unless I see the carrying out of its relationship to Christ as a present thing. If I see in an individual saint that which is not consistent, I am not happy, and so of the church. I do believe in these latter days that the Lord has awakened the minds and souls of many of the saints who were walking in single-eyedness, to examine what the church of God is. Therefore it is not surprising that Satan should come in to resist the truth of the Lord's coming, and the church's relationship to that. Besides this, many have come into the position of blessing, without knowing in themselves what the church's blessing is, and therefore feebleness is the result, for when worldliness crept in they fell backward and were discouraged. They had fellowship in the blessing, but they had not intelligence and fellowship in the principle and grace that produced the blessing, and consequently when there is the want of blessing, restless apprehension and uncertainty will be the result, for when Satan comes in upon our souls, the shallowness of our faith appears.

Well, I see this, and bless the Lord that He is awakening in the souls of many saints everywhere the question-" What is the church of God 2 " I have no doubt that with many very dear saints we should find that they have no definite idea of what the church is beyond the thought, that there are certain persons who are saved and brought to glory. This is true, but then it is clear that the understanding of the relationship in which the church stands to Christ is the basis of all its affections to Christ. If the Lord is now awakening saints to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the relationship of the church to Christ, and it is not understood, we cannot be bearing a true

and faithful testimony for God; and I add further that the truth which does not come up to any special testimony of God at a given time is used by Satan to hinder its reception. Satan will use a past testimony to hinder the reception of the testimony God has raised up for His saints. Thus, the unity of the Godhead is a truth we all hold, but it was held by the Jews for the upset of Christianity. They held " Jehovah our God is one Jehovah," but they did not hold the Father and the Son. Thus they strove to upset the special testimony by which God was then acting-the revelation of the Father and the Son. If God is presenting truth to set His saints in a place of testimony, Satan will also seek to perplex their minds about that very truth, so that they should not be able to give any testimony concerning it. If Satan succeeds in distracting their minds so that they become tired of it, and go back to past truth, then Satan has gained his point by perplexing their minds. Now this is most important. Yet the Lord has always the upper hand of Satan. I doubt not there will be some Lots, who will get tired, but I believe the exercise of soul on the subject will be used by the Lord to bring the souls of those who are faithful on to more solid ground. Thus as to the Lord's second coming, and the presence of the Holy Ghost in the church, many may get hindered, but souls walking in simplicity will be more strengthened by these efforts of Satan.

As regards the salvation of any soul, it is by the blood and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I do not dwell now on the great truth of the work of Christ, and the quickening of the Spirit; neither do I dwell on the fact that the Old Testament saints were saved by the blood, and will be in resurrection glory with the Lord. I assume all this as acknowledged truth, taking it for granted that the soul may rest there, while I go on to other points. And first, Has God taught us anything about the church of God?

Now there are many very precious saints, sound in the faith, who are not prepared to accept what the church of God is as set forth in the word of God. If it is meant that all the saints ever saved will in the end be in company in glory, and surround the second Adam as His family, so to speak, in redemption and life through Him, and they call that the Assembly of God, I have no objection. I do not doubt that the second Adam will have all around Him in glory, as the first Adam had all around him in sin. But scripture speaks of another thing which greatly concerns us-of our place, our privileges and responsibilities. In Israel it was the same thing; it was true that there was salvation before Israel was a people, for Abraham was saved before Israel was brought in, and yet there was a distinct revelation concerning Israel, and relationship based on it; and if any neglected the revelation, they would not only have been unfaithful, but would have lost blessing. David was saved as Abraham was, but the manner of his relationship and responsibilities towards God on earth were not the same as Abraham's, because David formed part of a people placed in a position, the claims of which did not apply to Abraham. If Samuel and others had neglected this, they would have been unfaithful to God, because the ground on which God had set them as a nation was the measure of their special responsibility to Him. In the word of God I find that the church of the living God is a body brought into testimony by the Spirit of God definitely and distinctly, as set in a special relationship to God. And now, as the Lord may enable me, I will show you what the church is.

The church of the living God is the body of saints formed on earth in unity with Christ in heaven as the Head, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to form them into unity with Christ at the right hand of God. The church is not merely a number of saved persons, but a body formed into unity with Christ their Head, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven consequent on the exaltation of

Jesus to the right hand of God. There has been a habit of calling all the saints from first to last the church, and there is a fear lest tender-hearted saints who have done so should be alarmed by altering it. I greatly respect the jealousy of souls (who have the consciousness of the electing love of God, in saving every one whom He has called from Adam downward), in being alarmed lest this distinction should affect the foundation of salvation through the blood according to God's electing love; but still it is my duty as well as my privilege to understand the position in which God has set me, and to call by the right name what God has called by name in scripture.

The Lord said to Peter, " On this rock I will build my church." He had not been building from Adam downwards, but He says, " I will build." What do I find people talking about? A visible and invisible church. Now this is Satan's lie. The so-called visible church is in fact the world, and cannot give any testimony at all for Christ. If I say it is an invisible body, the testimony is all gone. In Israel, what was the visible body then? A nation. God's unity then was the unity of a nation, ninety nine out of a hundred of whom were not converted-the true saints were invisible for God had His hidden ones among them. When Christ came Anna spake of Him to all who waited for redemption in Israel. But the church of God is very different, though so often confounded with this state of believers in Israel. The saints are now formed on earth into a body in unity with Christ risen by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus. Our relations, our affections and our duty to Christ are all founded on this truth; and if it be not understood, there must be defect in the walk and in the consciences of the saints. When the Lord said to Peter, " I will build," of course it was a thing not yet done. The foundation stone was Christ.

We all know the way the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks of this; indeed that epistle is founded on the truth that God has set Christ far above all principality and power in heavenly places consequent on His death and humiliation. Redemption work gave Him the title, although as the Son it was His already. The church is put into association with Him there. (Eph. 2) Before Christ came they waited for righteousness, and God forbore, but now we are waiting for the hope of righteousness; not waiting for righteousness, but for the hope-what belongs to righteousness. The righteousness of God is perfect in its accomplishment, Christ the Righteous One being set down in glory. God has now set up a people in union with Christ their Head by the power of the Holy Ghost; hence I find that Jew and Gentile distinctions are done away. Before, the whole ground of God's dealings was the distinction of His people the Jews from the Gentiles, but now there is " neither Jew nor Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free." Was that ever before? At that time they were Gentiles in the flesh, but now made nigh. He "hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition." God had Himself built up the wall between them which He has now broken down, to make of twain one new man. Now many a Jew had been saved, but had not been made one new man with Gentile sinners called by God, through Him who hung upon the cross and abolished the enmity, and having ascended on high formed both into one new man in Himself. Simeon and Anna and many godly Jews who looked for redemption in Israel were saved, and saved, of course, as alone any can be, as saints are now saved; and what did God do with them? left them Jews. But when Peter preached and three thousand souls believed, what did God do with them? He added them to the church. " In whom also ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." The old habitation-a temple made with hands-is cast down, and a new one formed both of Jews and Gentiles. Eph. 3 opens out this mystery and adds, " Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly.... according to the power that worketh in us "; not for us. Chapter

4 is practically speaking of the vocation. If we get away from what has previously been spoken of, we cannot walk worthily of the calling by which we are called, and God has called the saints to be His habitation. It is not enough to be merely saints, but they must listen to the vocation, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It was not enough for Abraham to be a saint, but he must leave Ur of the Chaldees, because this was his calling, and if he had not obeyed, he would have acted most inconsistently as a man of God. When God had given him a sign to keep of His covenant relationship with Him, if his posterity had neglected to keep it, they would have been cut off from God's people-outwardly manifested as such on the earth. So also we do not answer to God's calling unless we obey it. Of course the church will form a glorious body in heaven, but the Spirit in addressing the church does so as on the earth. The Holy Ghost has come down and formed the church for a habitation of God here on the earth, not in heaven. In Eph. 4 we find certain gifts for the edifying of the body of Christ on the earth, not to edify it in heaven; "edifying itself in love" that is not in heaven; "making increase of the body" must be on earth.

In 1 Cor. 12 I find the same testimony most distinctly. The Spirit baptizes into one body on the earth, not in heaven. "Now hath God set the members every one of them in the body"; this was not done before. Israel was the body, as far as there was one in any sense, or God's assembly in the wilderness, and most of them unconverted. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." Nothing can be plainer than that the body is formed on earth (of course to be glorified in heaven) by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven after Jesus was glorified. This is what the church is as taught by the New Testament.

When I look at the church in glory, I look at it as a body securely and infallibly perfect in God. There will then be no question of glorifying God, for God will glorify Himself in us. I see that whenever man is put in a place of responsibility, in which he fails, God brings in a better accomplishment. Thus Adam fails, and the Lord Jesus becomes the fulfiller of his responsibilities for the glory of God as the second Adam. Israel failed; God gave them His law and thus brought them into a certain relationship with Himself which did not exist with any other people, and He required them to bear testimony to this, and for this they were responsible. Under God's new covenant the law will be written in their hearts, so that they will yet keep it. The priesthood itself failed, and I see the same thing in the church-at first set up, and then failing, but God will accomplish all in full purpose in glory; but there I see an important difference, for we ought to be by the Holy Ghost the manifestation of God's thoughts down here. What do I see in the church? The bride of Christ, engaging His affections as His bride, and her affections should be according to her relationship.

Now what do I mean by the ruin of the church? A simple question will answer this. Who will show me the manifestation of the unity of the body of Christ? I cannot find it; but I can find saints that will be saved; I can find the unfailing faithfulness of God in manifest tokens of His faithfulness, "for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst"-and therefore blessing, but the church as a manifested body on the earth is ruined. When Lo-ammi, not my people, was written upon Israel, still the Lord in Haggai comforts them with "according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." The power of God could not change, and hence the word, "fear ye not." When God said to Israel, "not my people," it was not that God gave them up. He did not change His mind; no, never! They shall be His people at last, because He did not mean in purpose when He said Lo-ammi, but

now they are Lo-ammi still.

I have been much struck of late with the fact that the Lord never addressed Israel as His people in the three prophets after the captivity (though He says they shall be hereafter) still the word was "fear ye not." It is not simply, then, the evil amongst "brethren" that gives me sorrow, but a certain character of discouragement among them (because of circumstances) from the lack of simple faith to rise above the circumstances to Christ. Does Christ love the church less? Is He less powerful? Faith has constant unfailing confidence in Christ. I know what sorrow is, but discouragement I do not know. If you are counting on your own strength, then I am not surprised at your discouragement, but "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth." We ought to be humbled-ah! humbled in the dust, if you please, but never discouraged. A truly humble man is not discouraged; the discouraged man is not a humble man, for he has trusted, as man, to something beside God; true nothingness cannot. "While men slept, his enemy.... sowed tares." Does this discourage? No. "Let both grow together until the harvest." Some years after the conversion of my soul I looked around to find where the church was, but I could not find it. I could find plenty of saints better than myself, but not the church as it was set up with power on the earth. Then I say the church as thus set up is ruined, and I cannot find a better word for it. The church is ruined as Israel never was, and will be cut off as though it had never been, for this reason: when Israel was God's witness on the earth, the veil was not rent, and therefore if Israel failed under the old covenant, they can be brought in under the new, but the church was founded on the earth in the spirit of the new covenant, and if it fails, there is no veil to be rent now. Judgment has been executed on Israel, and Israel has no place now as a nation, but on the church God has not executed judgment; we must not confound ruin with cutting off.

I feel the importance of definitely apprehending the relationship in which the Lord has set us; it will touch us in our consciences, not merely saying the church is secure-surely it is, but we ought to be touched with the sense of our relation to Christ, and the responsibility of that relationship. Hence would flow that rigid obedience, and obedience is the only thing in which a Christian should be rigid, it would keep us from latitudinarianism; and there should be nearness to Christ which would keep us from sectarianism, the most natural weed of the human heart (sectarianism is getting an interest in a little circle round ourselves), and would give us a feeling as to, and an interest in, the whole church of God, for Christ can love nothing less. Then I shall refuse to own anything that is not the bride of Christ, but be ready always to acknowledge and receive that which is the bride of Christ. Will Christ have an English bride-a Swiss bride-a French bride? No. The evangelical alliance, is that it? No. At home and abroad I find this question, What is the church of God? One says, The church is visible. What do you mean?-that the professing church is the visible church of God? What is its testimony? Is it to Christ its heavenly Head, separate from sinners? Another says, It is invisible. What? the church of the living God invisible! What then is its testimony? It is only invisible because in sin. There is a false church visible, a true one invisible.

But there is no enmity produced by such a conviction against those mixed up with the evil, or in ignorance of it, because the man who is certain, though he may be pained, can never feel enmity. When "brethren" came out, what were they? Nothing. What was their feeling? They took up the interest of the church of God, desiring to see all who loved God manifested in it. A large measure of blessing followed; numbers joined. Then came trouble and trial within, and that plentifully occupied their hearts, and practically that became their circle, and consequently not the church of

the living God. People say, we have been too narrow, we must mix up a little. No, never, I cannot go back. " If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." I have nothing to go back from. The one desire of my heart is the beauty and blessing of the church-the bride of Christ. That will make me earnestly love all saints for they are of it. I desire its entire separation to Christ to whom she belongs-espoused as a chaste virgin. My feet in the narrow way-my heart as large as Christ's.

It occurs to me to add a thought as to difficulties in some minds. The church of God as distinguished from other things which are found in scripture. This is not only a question of interest to our minds, but one of extreme importance. First, the question as to Rom. 11 To many minds it has the appearance of grafting the church on to the previous system. This has the effect of keeping the mind in abeyance. If our souls are kept in hesitation there is no affection at work, and what I desire to see is active affection. Secondly, Eph. 2:19, " Fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Lastly, distinguishing between the church of God and the kingdom of heaven. There are two things (Matt. 16), " On this rock I will build my church "; there is no key there. Then it is further said to Peter, " I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

It is clear to me that Rom. 11, properly speaking, has nothing to do with the church as such, though it has to do with those who go to form the church. There is no thought here of the body in unity with the Head in heaven. The unbelieving Jews were broken off because of unbelief. Now in no possible sense could it be said that the Jews were broken off from the church, for they were never in it. The apostle speaks also of breaking off the Gentile branches. That cannot be the church, because in no possible sense can it be said that the church of the living God in its true sense is broken off. The whole wording of the chapter proves that the olive tree has reference to the line and channel of the administration of God's promises on the earth. In that all this takes place. The children of Israel were heirs of promise according to the flesh; they were broken off and the Gentiles grafted in. The Gentiles will be broken off if they do not continue in God's goodness, and the Jews grafted in again. The church cannot be broken off nor grafted in again; the olive tree shews the successional administration of God's promises on the earth. It is connected with God's outward dealings, and the moment this is seen the difficulty of the chapter is removed. The Jews will be grafted into their own Olive Tree again, not into this new thing, the church of God.

The passage in Ephesians is in direct contrast with what is here spoken of as the olive tree; it owns neither Jew nor Gentile. It is the position of the church down here, " fellow citizens with the saints." It is a simple fact that the Gentiles are what they never were before, but so, too, are the Jews who believe. The Gentiles are not brought into the previous condition of the Jews.

The passage does not speak of a previous Jewish state, the Jews themselves together with Gentiles are brought into a new condition where both are made one new man; they are " fellow citizens " together. It is not uniting the Gentiles to the previous Jewish constitution, but bringing Jews and Gentiles into a common new one.

Now one word as to the kingdom of heaven. It is in one point connected with the church, because it is the administration of the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, though it is invisible or in mystery now. It is not the reign of Satan or of the four beasts, but the reign of heaven. It is the reign of righteousness and judgment, and the thought of its being the church will not do, as I do not find grace characterizing it. When the kingdom of heaven was preached by John, he said, " Whose

fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor." " He will gather out of his kingdom all things that offend." Now this is judgment, and though the church will be associated with Christ in it as reigning with Him, yet the kingdom of heaven has not the same character as the church of the living God. Again, " Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me." This has nothing to do with the church of God or the gospel. Still the church has a testimony to the kingdom of heaven, that it is to be set up. Again in Psa. 68:23, " That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same." Now this is vengeance, and not the characteristic work of the power of redemption. This greatly facilitates the understanding of the psalms, for in them we constantly find the Spirit of Christ crying for judgment on His enemies. The dreadful expressions of vengeance in the psalms apply to the judgment of enemies on the setting up of the kingdom. In Psa. 21:8 we find that in consequence of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God there will be judgment upon His enemies, as it is said, " Thy right hand shall find out all thine enemies;" it speaks of Him as King. But in Psa. 22 there is not a word about enemies. When He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? " He was suffering for sin in the way of atonement. When it was that kind of suffering, His soul entered into it, as He, and He alone, could know it. Then I find nothing about enemies, but " I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." The principle is, that He takes His place among a happy people. The church is altogether above and beyond the kingdom; the church is a happy people associated with Christ in the love God has for Him. The church will reign with Christ over the kingdom, and she now owns Christ as King by right.

To return to Eph. 2 There is something entirely new. " We are his workmanship. (Ver. 10.) " And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." (Ver. 20.) They are not the prophets of the Old Testament, but of the New. This we see by comparison with chapter 3:5, " it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." What is here spoken of as revealed is something entirely fresh. There is one new man made of two sets of people. Jew and Gentile are done away with, and " He is our peace, who hath made both one." Jew and Gentile are brought in as " fellow citizens." The Gentiles could not be made Jews, but both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross. The apostle addresses those near and those far off, and of both one new man is made in Christ. They are " fellow heirs " in the new thing, the heavenly Jerusalem if you like it.

In Rom. 11 the point discussed is whether God has cast away His people. Whether Israel whom He foreknew should be cast off? " God forbid "! says Paul, " for I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people whom he foreknew;" though He may have cast off the nation temporarily. Now this question applied to the church would have been utter nonsense, as He was then and ever since gathering the church of God in by the gospel. " But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Was this casting them off? In verses 4,11, 26, the apostle gives three proofs that God had not cast off His people. God replied to Elijah when he said that he was left alone, It is not so at all, for " I have reserved unto myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal." " Even so then at this present time also," says the apostle, " there is a remnant according to the election of grace." Again, God is caring for them in the very bringing in of the Gentiles " to provoke them to jealousy." And again, " So all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." At the close of

chapter 8 the apostle had finished the salvation question-" no condemnation." Then comes the difficulty that in planting the saints in Christ he threw down the special place of the Jews-" there is no difference." He then reconciles this with God's immutable purposes towards Israel, and in chapter ix. reasons thus: If you say that as a child of Abraham you have a right, then Ishmael and Esau come in. Your national claim is through God's sovereignty, your own title of descent from Abraham will not stand, for then Ishmael and Esau have a title to come in. God exercises this same sovereignty in letting in Gentiles. Then in chapter 10 he shows the Jews how they stumbled. This is not the principle of sovereignty as in chapter ix.; it had happened according to the plain testimony of the Old Testament: " They stumbled at that stumbling stone." God has not ceased to care for Israel,

He is still carrying out His plan as to them,

and the Gentiles have been grafted in. If some of the branches are broken off it shows there must be some remaining, and He cares for them. " If God spared not the natural branches." Now who are the "natural branches " of the church of God? The natural branches are looked at as having been in the position of heirs of promise down here on the earth, and God is able to graft them in again (these Jews who were broken off) into the position on earth of heirs of promise. It is impossible to apply all this to the church, " Blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." How can this be the church? " The Jews beloved for the fathers' sakes." Is this the church of the living God?

QUES. Suppose a child of God recognizes what the church of God is, and its ruined condition, is he to labor and pray. for its restoration; or what course is he to pursue?

J. N. D. Well, if it is so (ruined) the conscience cannot be satisfied with it. If the church of God is responsible in walk and affection and everything to God, the conscience acknowledging the ruin, what is it to do? It cannot be satisfied for it cannot rest in a sinful state. Now the Lord remembers the kind of relationship in which we know ourselves to be, as in Jer. 2, "Go, speak in the ears of Jerusalem, I remember thee, the love of thine espousals "-not God's love to Israel, unailing as this proved to be, but Israel's love to God, when they thought God worth following for Himself, when they had nothing else beside. Then Jehovah asks, "What iniquity have your father's found in me?" Have I failed towards you in goodness? Their being in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, and being brought safe through, was the very proof that God was with them. They went on badly enough, they went back in heart to Egypt, and Dathan and Abiram despised Him; still, their being there in the wilderness proved that they cared for the Lord so as to follow Him, and the Lord here complains that no one said, " Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt "? that no heart referred to that time? Now Gideon did plead in this manner; his faith was in the Lord that brought them out of Egypt, and herein was the secret of his strength, for God said to him, " Go, in this thy might." It is impossible, if the word has reached our ears, that we should be contented where we are, for there cannot be contentedness where there is a sense of failure. As regards what I look for, and it is the one sole object before my soul, it is Christ's coming. If I have the spirit of the bride I shall desire the Bridegroom, because He is the Bridegroom. " The Spirit and the bride say, Come." There may be much ignorance as to what to do, but let the relationship, the affection to Christ be seen.

I should feel disappointment at the thought of reconstruction; if I have the Spirit of Christ I shall be sensible of the loss of suitability in the bride to Him, and the sense of unfaithfulness will be accompanied with the wish to become fitted for Him. " He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That is the principle; the bride that is looking for the Bridegroom will seek to be purified for Him; to be prepared and ready for him through " the washing of water by the word." Spiritual energy will seek that the church be ready for Christ. The Lord, spiritually, has brought us into a land of blessing, but we have lost the consciousness that we are for Him, and have become occupied with one thing and another, and are not sensible that we are for Him and for Him alone. It would be immeasurably happy for our souls if we knew nothing whatever of all that is passing around us, save as God Himself brings it before us, and had the light of that truth in full power on our souls, that we are for Him-the whole soul should be His, and His alone, Reconstruction is not the object of pursuit. Whenever a man from desire is in God's service, if he has not entirely God's object, he will succeed because he will be setting up something instead-some other object looking like it, but quite another thing. Paul did not succeed, for the end with him was "all seek their own." When a man has God's object, and is thoroughly working for God, he must be a man of sorrows. Paul never got the faith of his fellow laborers nor the church up to his own. The true notion as to the church now is-a people made ready in spirit for their Lord; not as adorned, because that is resurrection glory, but kept ready in spirit by the " washing of water by the word." I believe the sole object in all ministry, even in evangelizing, is to present the church to God as Christ's bride-wholly separated unto Him as a bride ought to be. Ministry and reconstruction of the church are quite different things. I am ministering to-night, but not reconstructing. Many may be confused in their minds on this point. Now I do not doubt that ministry comes in as " washing of water by the word " in order to " make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Now I must guard against any thought that I undervalue order. Subjection to the Spirit of God is shown in subjection to what the Spirit of God gives; but I am not pursuing that as an object, but looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Still I do not doubt but that all my service to the saints down here will come in as ministry.

QUES. Is there a church now on earth or not?

J. N. D. Is there an army or not? Suppose an army not destroyed but scattered to the four winds-why, there is an army, and there is not an army; it has lost its corporate character.

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