

WRITINGS OF PHILIP B POWER

by Philip B. Power

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Philip B. Power, compiled for study and devotional reading.

22 Chapters

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01.00. THE FEET OF JESUS

THE FEET OF JESUS in Life, Death, Resurrection and Glory by Philip Bennett Power, 1872

01.01. Chapter 1 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Helpless Misery

Chapter 1 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Helpless Misery

"Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at His feet; and He healed them." Matthew 15:30 The head of Jesus was crowned with thorns on earth; it is crowned with glory in heaven—and in either aspect we feel that it is a subject far beyond our grasp. It moves our feelings, it excites our admiration, and we wonder and adore—where we cannot understand. But the feet of Jesus! those feet which were weary, which were dust-soiled, which moved about the common haunts of man; perhaps we think we understand more of them. It may be that we do understand "more," but not "all." We do not understand all about any one footprint which He left on earth. There are reasons why He went to this place and to that, and why He left it, far beyond our reach. Yes; take any one footprint; see in it the earth or the dust of a fallen world, bearing the impress of the foot of the Son of God made man; why is that footmark there? What is the very first origin of it? What is the full extent of its meaning? There is no human intellect which can reach to this!

There are in this matter, hidden things which belong to God; but there are also things revealed, which belong to us and to our children—things which intertwine themselves with our present position, with our daily need, with Christ's relationship to us, and ours to Him. It is upon such, that we desire to dwell in these chapters. We feel that we need the Spirit's guidance, to teach us so much as even the least thing about 'the feet of Jesus.' In this great gathering, of which Matthew here speaks, we have the feet of Christ presented to us as the place for helpless misery—the place of simple pity. This scene is an epitome of the history of our Lord. Multitudes of diseased are on one side—Himself, the solitary Healer, on the other; they are cast at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. The feet of Jesus was the place for all this helpless misery; there it found simple pity; and in that pity, a supply for all its need. When I see, then, all these people cast at the feet of Jesus, and lying there, the thoughts which I have are these—

1. I see Him, the well-defined center of a circle, with an undefined circumference. I am glad that we are not told exactly how many were healed, and that we have not a perfect catalogue of the diseases under which they were suffering. I like to think what a vast number that "many others" may include—to think that from north, south, east, west, the miserable people all came. So large is the circle of human misery that, no human mind can even imagine its outer limits. We think, perhaps, that we know a good deal of deep heart-sinkings and sorrows ourselves; but, ah! others have some far deeper than ours; they are exercised on subjects and in ways that we have not an idea of; and in the vast sweep of all this misery stands Jesus the Healer—His feet are in the center.

"Many others" were cast down at His feet. There is great beauty and use in the indefiniteness of Scripture, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden." It is meant to bring to the feet of Jesus, all people however so far off—people who otherwise never would have imagined that they might venture. The feet of Jesus

is the place for all helpless misery—yours and mine, and "many others'.

But, in the matter of Christ, it is above all things necessary that everything should be very precise, "Come unto ME." Therefore the sick were cast at His very feet. Christ entered the circle of misery for a purpose—that He might draw the miserable to Him. He stands, He sits, He walks in it—that He may be near people. His holy feet are down in our earth-dust, that creeping, or lying helpless, or cast down almost in despair, we may be near some part of Him; and to be near any part of Jesus is to be near healing and life. That woman who touched the hem of His garment bent close to His foot, and even there, found all that she required.

2. I think that Jesus is a gatherer-in of human misery. It was to be such a gatherer, that He came on earth—that was His one object; to fit Himself for that, He became man, and lived, and died. And here, He was a man above men. What most desire is, to gather gain—for that they live, for that too often toil until they die. They desire to throw off misery; it is troublesome and expensive, and perhaps distressing to them. What they throw off—Jesus takes in to Himself. If we, then, are miserable in any way, and know not where to go, or on whom to lay our load—let us betake ourselves quickly of the ingatherer of sorrows. Did not His feet travel, when on earth, to the abode of illness and of death? Did they not stand still, when He was cried after? He never used those, His human feet—to run from misery; or like the priest and Levite to pass by on the other side; but He stood, and walked in misery's way.

Now we must lay this to heart. When we are miserable we must not say, "Where shall I go for sympathy? Who will pity me? Who will understand me, or my sorrow, or my case?" Behold, the ingatherer of human misery is walking close by you; there is no path of sorrow which does not bear an imprint of His foot!

3. I have also a thought concerning the pool of Bethesda. There, a multitude were waiting, and only one could be healed. There was no eye of sympathy to look upon the afflicted, no voice to speak to them; each man, forgetful of perhaps the greater woes of others, absorbed only in his own, rushed forward, if possible, to be the first to enter into the troubled waters—and so reap the solitary blessing which the pool contained.

Here, on this mountain-side, sits Jesus. There is no troubling here; there need not be. Whatever troubling there is, is always on man's side. With Him all is calm. We see in our mind's eye the multitudes toiling up the mountain-side; the eagerness, the anxiety, the casting down at Jesus' feet; and beautifully simple is all that we have told us of what He did, "He healed them all." Those simple words, no doubt, fitly express the calm with which He wrought upon the mass of misery prostrate at His feet.

4. And I think that, in truth, there lay before Jesus, if we might be bold enough to say so—no alternative but to heal them all. The only alternative was to get up and go away; or tell the people who brought their loved sick ones, to take them back again unhealed; but what an alternative would that have been to Him! He could never have done this!

So, then, when we cast down our sorrows, or ourselves, or our friends' sorrows, or themselves, right at the feet of Christ—let us think, 'He cannot go away from them.' This is no presumption, no lowering of Jesus, no detraction from His power; but it is a holy faith and courage to have such a thought, and it is greatly honoring to Him. What would become of us, if it had been even once

recorded that Jesus was too busy to attend to such and such a person, or that He refused anyone, and sent him away unhealed? No doubt Satan would say, "Ah, that case is just like yours!" Or our own poor mistrusting hearts would be sure to fix upon it, and to feel, "So and so was sent away; ah! my experience may be the same!" But Jesus, owing to the blessed pitifulness of His nature, cannot go on—no, not a single step—if a helpless, suffering being, willing to be healed, is cast in faith athwart His path. He is rooted and bound by misery. Such is His blessed human nature that, if He were obliged to spurn the miserable from His feet, or to go away from them—He would be miserable Himself! In our sorrow, then, let us look at Christ tied and bound by the laws of His own loving nature; let us put the power of those laws against our own fears, and the repulsiveness of our sins; and faith will strengthen itself, and lay many people, and many sorrows at the feet of Jesus.

5. Further, I think of the helpless misery of that crowd cast down at Jesus' feet. Lying there, they suggest the thought that conscious helplessness has in itself, power with Jesus. Coming so closely in the sacred narrative, upon the impassioned entreaty of the Syro-Phoenician woman at the feet of Jesus (which has a lesson of its own,) it seems to have a special teaching. For many might say, "We cannot plead as she did." Diffident of their own earnestness and energy; and seeing how much was won by the Syro-Phoenician woman by the exercise of these qualities, they might say, "If Christ has to be so hardly entreated, then what can we hope to get—we who are feeble, who seem as though we are not wise enough to use arguments which can reach His head, or strong enough to utter cries which can pierce His heart?" We need only read on a little further—and behold the multitudes simply lying at His feet.

These sick people thus lying at Jesus' feet have a voice to us—their helplessness speaks to ours; it says, "Perhaps you cannot address arguments like the Syro-Phoenician woman to the head of Christ; or, it may be, you are dull in pleading with the affections of His heart; then do not consider that all is over—that there is nothing for you; do not depress yourself with what you cannot do; think rather of what you can do. You can lie at Jesus' feet, where he must see you. You are very close to Him—when you are at His feet." In common, everyday life, men are frequently losing gain which they might have had—while aiming at something higher which they cannot have; so is it in the spiritual life too. While aiming at what is much higher than we at present have capacity for—we miss what is within our reach.

We must not fret ourselves that we have not attained to this or that energy of spiritual life, and shut out the comfort of knowing that we have "something"—that we are at the Savior's feet. Satan would hide from us that we are there; for he knows that none tarry long there in humble waiting, without being lifted up and given strength.

If the reader feels very helpless, let him not flee from this thought, but use it; and the way he is to use it is this. He is to lie still at Jesus' feet—not to want to move at all—not to be restless; Jesus sees him—and that is enough.

6. Now I think how beautifully simple everything is here; the few and unadorned words in which this great transaction is recorded lead us to thoughts of simplicity. There is simple TRUST on the part of the afflicted people, and those who brought them; and simple PITY on the part of Jesus.

Blessed be God for all the simplicity in the gospels; it is as little children we must receive the kingdom of heaven, and simple food suits the infancy of the soul—yes, and its ripe old age. For when many things have been learned about types and prophecies, and many speculations have been made, and systems of theology constructed; what does the soul fall back upon, when in view of eternity—but just the simple truth of "Jesus died—and rose again for us!" That was what made a prelate eminent in learning and controversy say, in extreme old age, and in his dying hours, "Don't talk to me of the cross—but of the One who hung upon the cross." This was no abstract distinction. The One who hung upon it—was what the soul needed; there were the very feet, at which it could lie.

Let us say to ourselves and to others—What is needed for healing—is not many thoughts, or high thoughts, about Jesus, or any intellectual knowledge about Him at all—but the plainest simplicity of trust; and it will be very helpful if we see that the like simplicity is in Him. Simple pity! that is what we are to look for from Jesus. We need not connect it with any theological thoughts; it is a pure uncompounded feeling; and where shall we see it exercised, as on those who are simply cast at His feet?

Let us learn, then, the value of bringing our afflicted ones to the feet of Christ, feeling we can do no more than that. We have perhaps tried many physicians with them, and they are no better—but rather the worse. Kindness has not melted them, punishment has not corrected them, discipline has not restrained them. We must now not "cast them off," but "cast them down" at the feet of Jesus. And having done this, we must not yield to desponding feelings of helplessness. We are now really nearer to being helped, than ever we were before. We are now in the right place before Christ—in the right position—that of expectancy; with the right feelings—those of self-helplessness, and yet hope. Who knows how soon you will say, "We cast them down at Jesus' feet—and He healed them!"

01.02. Chapter 2. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Ministration

Chapter 2. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Ministration

"And a woman in the town who was a sinner, found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil and stood behind Him at His feet, weeping, and began to wash His feet with her tears. She wiped His feet with the hair of her head, kissing them and anointing them with the fragrant oil." Luke 7:37-38

If man had been informed by God that He was about to reveal His only Son to the world, and had been asked what form this revelation should take, there is little doubt what his answer would have been. He would have said, "As the Son of God, it is fit that He should appear in great glory; a throne must be His seat, legions of angels His attendants; the music of heaven must float around Him, the radiance of heaven beam from Him; without shading—the eye should not be able to look upon Him, and without trembling—the knee should not stand before Him." But the ways of God are not as our ways, neither are His thoughts like ours. And so, before He gives us a revelation of His Son in glory, with a countenance shining as the sun in his strength, with a head glorious with many crowns, and feet like unto fine brass, as though they burnished in a furnace—He presents Him to us with a visage marred more than any man's; with head unpillowed and with feet unwashed. For this, so unexpected an appearance—so low an abasement of the Son of God, there must have been deep reasons in His Father's mind. Some of these we ourselves can see; and such divide themselves into two classes—those which belonged to His humiliation as necessary for the atonement; and those which have to do with us in our feeling and communion with God, and practical spiritual life—internally in our thoughts, externally in our acts.

How would it have been with us, if we had not seen Christ, as it were, from head to foot, as He is revealed to us in the history of His life on earth—in the very fullness of His human nature? We never could have gone out to Him in our human nature. We might have taken off our shoes and worshiped where His feet had trodden, for it was holy ground; but we could never have walked with Him. We would have considered what was essentially human in us—too small to come into contact with what was essentially and wholly Divine, with what was so awesome. The confidings of our human nature would have been all pent in. We would have been frightened to go to Him with many a tale, which we can now tell Him without fear. But why is it thus now, when His last appearance, as given in the Revelation, is so grand? Because many thorns preceded the many crowns; and weariness and neglect were the portion of those feet, which having passed heaven's threshold in triumph, now burn like fine brass! Nor could we have believed in Christ's sympathy as we do now; our dull hearts would not have been so assured of His feeling for us, unless we knew that He also had felt trials like our own. Nor could we have offered Him our feelings and infirmities, as we now can. What a wonderful thought this is! God in Christ desires human sympathies; He has so arranged that these sympathies are possible, that they can reach Him—that we may offer Him our feelings; and He has given us the privilege of solidifying our feelings. This poor woman's

offering to the feet of Jesus—her tears and ointment, and that lowly ministry of her hair, became, so to speak, solidified; the Jesus who turned water into wine has made them shine with a resplendent light for His Church through many ages.

God loves to embody His thoughts; they are so embodied in countless forms of beauty around us. He embodied them pre-eminently in Christ, and He wills that we should embody our sympathies with Jesus. Therefore let us do as this woman did—let us not merely talk, and look—but do. He who sympathizes practically with the lowly ones of Christ, or with the small and worrying troubles of even the smallest of His people, does so with His feet—they wash, they wipe, they anoint, they kiss. The activities of practical Christian life are constructed and based upon, and energized by, the personality of Jesus. Everywhere we are met by "the man Christ Jesus." Mere dreams and sentiments take flight before a substantial Christ. If only we will see it—He is still in our midst. Take Him away, and our spiritual life will be divested of a central, moving figure—one whose life on earth, as well as whose glory in heaven—are ever to be before us. And so, we might go on with many other evils which would happen, if we had not as a Christ—One who with human feet walked the same earth as we do, and whose feet were ministered to with such acceptance as we find here.

Thus keeping before us the person of Jesus, we also may in our measure realize the apostle's words, "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life."

Let us do all things so personally to Christ—let us hear His voice saying so plainly, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren—you have done it unto me," that we may indeed be able to take up those words and say, "What we have seen, looked upon, handled of the Word of life." A large subject is embraced here—but we shall confine ourselves to the Feet of Christ as the place of personal ministrations.

Let us mark here the highest, or heaped-up nature of this woman's service. There was washing, wiping, kissing, anointing. It is like a cluster of diamonds in a single ring, like many fruits on one bough. And the first thought which strikes us concerning it is a sorrowful one; it is the difference between this woman's highest service, and the poor, and often grudging service, which we offer. We look upon service too often as under law—that we are commanded to do this and that; it becomes the fulfillment of law, and nothing more. And so it comes to pass, that much of our service becomes grudging or of necessity, and inquires not "how much can be given," but "what will be enough," "what will barely do." The hardness which belongs to law enters into this service; and like all our attempts at law-keeping, it falls short. But this woman's service was under no law. She was not even under the unwritten law of hospitality; for Jesus was not in her house. This service was the representative not of law—but love; and in love it found a motive power, which law never could have supplied.

Let us aim at the highest service—to do much to Christ; for in doing it for Him, we do it to Him. And let us remember that this service will not be noted merely in the mass, God will separate it into its component parts. Each specific good thing will be noted. God will unwind the golden thread into its various strands; He will pass the ray beneath a prism, which will divide it into many hues.

We take things in the lump; our earthliness, our lack of memory, our imperfect power of perception, all conduce to this; but God is too exact not to note the parts which make up the whole.

If we pay a visit to the sick for His sake, He notes all the component parts of that visit—the cheery word we uttered, the tone in which it was spoken, the gentle touch of the sick one's hand, the patient silence while listening to complaints, the loving craft by which we sought to take the afflicted one's mind, away from himself. In our mind—it may be, in the sick one's mind—we paid a visit, and that was all. But God knows what there was in that visit, and He counts it all up, and records it even as He does the washing, wiping, kissing, and anointing here. The feet of Jesus were the recipients of love's highest service; and what encouragement is there here to those who are diffident about aiming high. The feet, at least, are open to them; they may pour out all their fullness upon what is very lowly, yet belonging to Christ. The lowliest object may be the recipient of highest service. Jesus Himself took care to point this out when He said, "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren—you have done it unto me!"

There is also a certain perfection in this service which the reader is invited to observe. There was washing and wiping. This was no half—no unfinished service—but one altogether perfect in its kind. The wiping was the needed consequence of the washing; and it is forthcoming, and that with no diminution of love's intensity. There were tears with which to wash—and there was hair with which to wipe.

One fact which strikes us here is, the continued strength or energy of this service; the ministry of the tears of her eyes—is immediately followed by that of the hair of her head. Surely this woman's hair and tears have a voice for us. When we put our service by the side of hers—we are reminded how often we diminish, how often we leave unfinished, how often we think we have done enough, when there plainly remains yet more to be done.

Some of the most beautiful services in God's eyes are probably so from their perfection, and not their extent. God loves what is perfect in its kind. Its kind may be very lowly; He Himself has made a great many very lowly things—little flowers and insects which make no pretension to being otherwise than lowly; but when He had seen everything that He had made, He pronounced it to be "very good." Lowliness of position, and perfection of kind may go together.

It is a sign of a perfect workman not to leave anything unfinished; and LOVE should be of all workers, the most perfect. But there was another element of perfection in this ministry to the feet of Jesus. She gave not only herself, but her substance. After washing, wiping, and kissing, all three as it were givings of her very self—she anointed Him with the ointment from the alabaster box.

There were three personal services—services of herself—before there was the giving of substance. The ointment was very precious—but it did not weigh down what had gone before.

It might be said, service can be recognized in the washing and wiping; but what service was there in the kissing? The answer is that, a kiss is a service of love—a performance of the lip on behalf of the heart; the heart feeling that it must do something to show its love, and the lip lending it its aid. This woman probably uttered not a word during all this process of love—let it not be considered a contradiction in terms that, her KISS was the voice of voiceless love. From the position in which the mention of her kissing of Jesus' feet is found—midway between the two ministries of the washing and wiping, and the anointing—a thought arises with reference to our own personal

feeling in service. It must needs have been, that this worshiping woman had herself some of the enjoyment of love's sweetness and refreshment, when she kissed those feet of Jesus. It is no irreverence—but strictly within the probability of things, to believe that an ineffable sense of happiness passed through her, as she thus vented her adoring love upon the honored feet of Jesus!

I accept with comfort the suggestion which hereon rises in my mind. I say, "There is to be happiness for the server in his service—as well as honor for the served one, in being served."

And, reader, you must seek to enjoy this privilege. Do not argue against yourself and say, "How can there be any happiness where there are tears?" Ah! some of the most delicately-shaded happiness is found amid tears. There are flowers which are obliged to hang down their heads by reason of the heavy showers—but their perfume has not gone.

Seek for personal happiness when rendering to Jesus personal service; seek for refreshment to your own soul, when refreshing His people—that is, Himself.

Let us bracket kissing and anointing together, as we did washing and wiping; the one was a true symbol, the other a costly and substantial reality of love. Kisses may be poor things like Orpah's, or deceitful like Judas'. But when the kiss and the fatted calf go together—the kiss and the ointment—there is no mistake. But let us return more immediately for a moment from this ministering woman—to the feet which were ministered unto. All was lavished upon the least, as it were of Jesus—upon His feet.

How often we think that only the head—some great cause of Jesus, or some great enterprise for Him can be worthily served. But the feet of Jesus had here a great capacity for absorbing service, the washing, wiping, kissing, anointing—were all accepted and appreciated.

We know that the very head of Jesus may be anointed—that He graciously places it within our reach; that what may be called great enterprises for Him may be undertaken; but for the most part we have to do with the feet.

Let not the reader, then, sigh after great spheres of service, or seek great outvents for love to his Savior. He who is untrue in the least, would be also untrue in the greatest; he who neglects the feet would neglect the head. Amid the dust-soiled, the way-worn, and the neglected will be found recipients capable of absorbing all the service that we can give. Like the feet of Jesus, they lie within our reach; it is only fit that the lowest and the least of God's—should be able to absorb the greatest and the best of ours. It will be a great encouragement to us in our ministrings among humble people, or in doing humble offices, to remember that they actually have a capacity for swallowing up our utmost efforts—they are big enough for the most that we can do. From among many others which lie to hand, let us just take one point more for a moment's thought.

What shall we do with our tears? The world is full of tears, and many of them are wasted. Now there should be no waste of anything, and tears are not intended to be spilt upon the ground. The Psalmist knew that God valued tears when he prayed, "Put my tears into Your bottle."

Tears are to be brought into connection with Jesus. The tears which touched the feet, thrilled through the being of the Lord. We may hold back, thinking that we cannot reach the heart of Christ; but let us touch Him anywhere, His whole being is sensitive, He will soon say, "Somebody,

something has touched Me!" And now, lastly, let those who read these lines make up for the neglect of duty by others, by the exuberance and fullness of their own love.

Simon's duty, in common hospitality, was to have given Jesus water for His feet. He gave it not; but this woman supplied its place with tears. May we have that love, which will supply the deficiencies even of those who profess to entertain the Lord. The closest personal services done to Him—those which will gain most place in that history which is for eternity—are those, not of duty—but of love; and many of them done, as it were, only to the "feet of Jesus."

01.03. Chapter 3. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

Chapter 3. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

"Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying!" Luke 8:41-42

"Immediately after hearing about Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit came and fell at His feet!" Mark 7:25

"When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him—Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!" John 11:32

We have in Holy Scripture, something about the feet of Jesus—as regards His life on earth, His death, His resurrection life, and His life in glory. We are at present concerned only with incidents which refer to those feet, while He lived and moved as a man among men, in what we might call the ordinary walks of every-day human life. No doubt, what meets us here is very extraordinary—but the scenes in which we find it embrace the usual places, people, and things of daily life.

Among the various mentions which we find of Jesus' feet, that with which we commenced these chapters is the only one embracing numbers of people; all the rest have to do with individual persons—their individual feelings, their troubles, their needs. And if we follow them out, we shall find them embodying and illustrating many of the experiences and feelings of Christian life. In the Syro-phoenician woman—we see the trial and victory of Faith—Jesus allowing Himself to be overcome. In Mary after Lazarus' death—we find the venting of personal sorrow. In the Samaritan—we see the expression of gratitude. In the anointing woman—we have seen personal love and ministry. In the woman sitting at His feet—we have appreciation. In the man sitting at His feet—see the recognition of the place of rest. The leper who fell down before Jesus—gives us the expression of terrible personal need. And in Peter falling at His feet, we see the abasement of felt personal demerit.

One great beauty of the Bible, and one of the means by which it takes such deep hold of us, is its individual cases; our natures crave what is personal, and find it here; they fix upon it; they take special comfort from it.

We cannot take in the woe of masses; we have no capacity for doing so—it is well that we have not. A single case with all its particulars can be realized; we enter into it, and it affects us more than any amount of anguish, no matter how great, which is but a confused mass. We read of so many thousands being wounded in some dreadful war—but let there be in the article which states this, an incident of individual suffering, and the human mind instinctively fixes itself on that.

It is a blessed thought that all masses of misery resolve themselves into their component parts—into individual cases before God. His great mind is analytical—it goes into particulars and details. And here—much of the soul's life—yes, and of the body's life too—might be said to be analyzed at "the feet of Jesus."

Here we have the feet of Jesus—the place for agonizing personal suppliants—for the stating and pleading of individual need. In the three cases, which we have grouped together at the head of this chapter, we might be said to have to do entirely with "death." In the case of the Syrophenician woman, there was a living death—a life almost worse than death. In that of Jairus, there was present death—first threatened, then actual. In that of Mary, there was the finished woe—her dear brother was dead—and buried. As long as the body remains with us there is something to look at—something to be done—the mind feels there is something yet to come; but when that is taken away, there remains nothing more—the woe is consummated—ah, me! it is well that there is such a place—as the feet of Jesus! In the first of our chapters, we met with multitudes and passive misery; here we meet with individual cases, where all is concentrated and active; and individual effort and energy are put forth in the highest degree.

We shall first consider the case of JAIRUS. Here I find him—a ruler of the synagogue, at "the feet of Jesus!"

"Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying!" Luke 8:41-42 What brought him there? A threefold sorrow—a mingled, a concentrated, a comprehensive sorrow.

It was mingled—both the daughter's and his own; she lay a-dying; and forasmuch as his heart was bound up in hers—his heart might be said to be a-dying also.

Mingled sorrow might be said to be the higher sorrow; it is not purely selfish; it has to do with others' woe. Though it does not exclude 'self;' to be mingled, it must give 'self' its place; but it has to do with another also. And this mingling is very close—here it is a father for an only daughter, and because of an only daughter; the two thoughts could be separated—but they are not meant to be so. So is it with many of the sorrows which God appoints for us; our feelings for our dear ones and our own personal feelings are interwoven so as to become one. But what we are principally concerned with here, is the fact that this sorrow was brought to the feet of Jesus. And surely that was its appropriate place; because Jesus Himself was a man of mingled sorrows. He was not only a man of sorrow—but of sorrows—He tasted this kind as well as others; it is included under the head of His "acquaintance" with grief. The cup which the Father had given Him in Gethsemane, was a mingled cup; those tears at the grave of Lazarus were mingled tears.

So, then, Jesus was the very one to whom a trouble like that of Jairus, or of the Syrophenician woman, could be brought; His feet were their proper place. And here let us bring our sorrows in their mingled form—let us not seek to scatter them; and look for comfort for one part here, and for another part there. Jesus, by His own experience, will understand all the component parts of our grief. And He will not be displeased because we seek relief for our own sorrow, as well as for the one on account of whom we are in grief. Personal sorrow is recognized; the same God who meant it to be felt—meant it also to be eased; and the place for ease by His appointment, is the feet of

Jesus.

I next note this as a concentrated sorrow—she for whom Jairus had come to the feet of Jesus was an only daughter. This sorrow, though mingled, was not shared; it savored much of an essence—an essence of woe. If the only daughter died—then all was gone. This woe was well defined indeed. And in this aspect of it—it found its fittest place at Jesus' feet. His own course of sorrow was well defined enough; He was continually coming into contact with facts, often in relation to His own closest disciples and friends, which grieved Him; He could have well-defined feeling for well-defined trial.

Let us remember this, for we are often thinking that our particular trial is infinitely more to us—than it is to Christ; that He does not see it to be as large as it really is; that He cannot feel it as we feel it, or understand it as we do; that His sympathies are so scattered and diffused, He cannot gather them into the focus of our one grief. Jesus can cause the rays of His sympathy to converge on one point, until He makes it glow and burn with a light and heat of love.

We must not fear, then, being intrusive, or say, "Why should I think that my sorrow which is so great to me—should be great to Him?" He will recognize it as being what it is to us. Even if it is an exaggerated sorrow—made so from our worry and anxiety, still to us it is real, and therefore, it is so to Him. An "only daughter;" here is a center, a pivot, something around which the dried-up heart would grind in days and nights of sorrow. And are there not some hearts which have uncoiled centers of sorrow, around which they unceasingly grind? They perform the one dull round of grief—the eye so fixed on one central point, that it soon becomes incapable of taking in anything else. Let it be brought to the feet of Jesus, that is the only place for dealing with sorrow like this. Remember the picture painted for you here—it is that of one deep sufferer, about one sorrow, before one Helper.

We must glance at one more aspect of this sorrow. It was comprehensive. Like all, or almost all those connected with death, it took in a past and a future. Oh! the wide-spreading comprehensiveness of death—that circle with so sharp and well-defined a point for a center, with so large and vast-embracing a sweep for a circumference.

Jairus brought a past to the feet of Jesus—a past full of endearment. For twelve years this child had been creeping around his heart, ever budding, ever throwing out fresh tendrils, which found their clinging place around that heart. For twelve years had she nestled inside it, so that his very life was as it were, the enfolding of another. It may be that father with child, and child with father, they mingled their lives together. Perhaps, this only daughter had helped to keep this father fresh and young, by the sweet unconscious ministry of youth—for children minister to us by their toys, and laughter, and the fresh dew upon their early morning life; perhaps, he had often sat, and with sweet contentment watched the mother being reproduced in the child. Who knows into what depths this "perhaps" will travel, if we let it go forth unrestricted into twelve years' life with an only child?

It is said that fathers love their girls the most, and mothers their sons the most; and whatever is that peculiarity of affection, it is beautiful to see how Jesus meets its sorrow, for He raised Jairus' only daughter; and the widow of Nain's only son. He not only gave them back their all—but a peculiar all; and, doubtless, He knew that He was doing so, for He is delicately skilled in the

peculiarities of grief.

It was with such a past—a past with a great circle, and that, crowded with the imagery of love, that Jairus, the father, fell at Jesus' feet. But that was not all. He knows little of death-sorrow who imagines that it is all connected with the past. Far from it. The death-sorrow is a stand-point upon life's road—with a past brightly populated, with a future darkly blank.

I bear in mind the almost indignation with which a friend of mine—advanced in the life of faith, received a letter on her husband's death condoling with her on her "misery." To her, full of Christian hope, and well knowing that God had yet for her a life to be lived for Him, full also of all the consolations that the Gospel can give—the word was out of place—she felt it was a wrong to God. But consolations like these—certainly those high ones of the Gospel, this ruler had not; and so we may ponder how blank and void, how unseasoned and lusterless was that prospect which now lay before him. The father had probably looked forward to much; he had day-dreamings of what that girl would be to him in his old age; a father's heart had often taken to love's speculations, and built castles in the air—which now lay ruined at his feet—ruined, not by slow decay of time—but, as it were, by a lightning flash. The girl was then a-dying—to all intents and purposes dead, unless Jesus would come at once and help; and Jairus embodying in himself these varied forms of sorrow—the mingled, the concentrated, and the comprehensive—fell with them all—at Jesus' feet!

Up to the present, we have seen Jairus only as a father; but the narrative brings him before us in another character also—we are told he was "a ruler of the synagogue." And it is important to note this with reference to our present subject, "the feet of Jesus." A ruler of the synagogue, a great man, is before the One who was called the carpenter's son—and at His feet!

True need brings us very low. It brought down that ruler; it has done the same to many a one since. The rich, the honored, the intellectual, have been brought there. They might have dialogued with Jesus, and admired Him, and said, "You are a teacher come from God," and continued just as they were. But nothing, save a deep sense of need, would have brought them to the feet of Jesus.

All adventitious circumstances—all rank, riches, intellect—are swept away before the avalanche of urgent and tremendous need. Oh! how small these things seem—in the presence of overwhelming need—especially when they come on the platform on which death is already standing. Death makes an impertinence of them all. Our imagined personal importance becomes nothing there.

"A ruler" at Jesus' feet was a triumph of reality. And where have we been brought, and what has "the reality" done for us, or rather, with us? For there is a great difference between these two. Something must be done with us, before anything is done for us; we must be brought to the feet of Jesus, there to receive a life gift—a gift, which shall be a victory over death.

Let us take one more thought before we close this chapter.

"Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying!" The father invited Jesus to come into the very place, and scene, and home of sorrow. Into the place so lately instinct with joy—but which was now stilled; into the recesses of home life where everything which was associated with his departing joy lay around, there the ruler of the synagogue would bring Him

who was in truth a higher ruler than himself, for He had power even over death.

We do not like the world or outsiders to see our deepest and most sacred sorrow, especially when it is fresh; but if our heart has apprehended Jesus aright—we shall be ready to ask Him! His will be no look of curiosity, no cold taking in of circumstances in which He has no interest. Wherever He comes, whenever He speaks or looks—it is always with a purpose. And let us be circumstantial in the detail of our sorrow. Jairus told the Lord that he had one only daughter, and that she was twelve years old, and that she lay a-dying. All that he said would be helpful towards exciting Jesus' interest and moving His pity; which perhaps, he, who knew not Jesus' heart fully, would have thought necessary. We know that for this purpose it is not needed; still it is a good thing to enter into particulars with the Lord. It is treating Him with confidence; the very feeling that He will be specially interested, is honoring to Him. Every particular that we bring before Him, He will note—and act with reference to it too. So then, when we analyze this sorrow of the ruler, we see that there was enough to bring him (ruler though he was) to the place where we find him here—the place for every reader of these lines, in all sorrowful times—the feet of Jesus!

01.04. Chapter 4. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

Chapter 4. The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

"A woman whose little daughter had an evil spirit came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was Greek, a Syrophenician by birth, and she begged Him to drive the demon out of her daughter!" Mark 7:25-26 The first position which this woman took up does not appear to have been at the feet of Jesus. According to the account given us in Matthew, she seems to have followed Christ for some little time, probably at somewhat of a distance, crying after Him, and begging for mercy at once upon herself and her child. She was apparently within hearing distance—but that availed her nothing, for Jesus had not answered her a word. And if she heard the answer which the Lord gave to the disciples, when they asked that she should be given what she wanted and sent away, her chances of help seemed about utterly to perish. But "the feet of Jesus" had yet to be tried. Neither had the mother's perseverance, nor His grace—been tested as yet to the uttermost. That saying, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," which to some might have seemed a hurricane blast, enough to sweep her beyond all reach of hope forever, was in truth intended to catch her in eddies, which swift circling would soon sweep her into the center, and that center was "the feet of Jesus."

Here, on the very threshold of the story, we are met by our first teaching. We have here one brought to the feet of Jesus. It may seem to us that, so as the mother's heart were eased and the afflicted child were healed, it would have been all one whether this were accomplished by speaking to the woman at a distance—or at the very feet; but we may rest assured it is not so. Whether we see it or not, there are reasons in all the diversities of circumstances attending each particular act of Jesus' mercy.

And, first, let us observe that there are often preliminaries, and those not of a formal—but of a very important character, to our being found at the feet of Jesus. There are often preparations and exercisings of heart, before the knee of man bends at the foot of Christ. And they are all for this very purpose—that we may be brought there, and receive what is to be had there; and get that particular fullness of blessing which can only be obtained from close contact with Him.

"Why is it thus with me?" cries many a weary waiting soul, many a one knowing, as it thinks, the fullness of its need. Why but to learn, by an apparent prospect of failure in having that need supplied—that it really did not know how deep it was before? Why is it thus? Because you must know yet more the depth of what you do want, and the depth of what only Christ can give. At times we think we are close enough to Christ, within reach of Him to get what we want; but He means to bring us closer still, because He intends to give us more. The preliminaries of blessing are sometimes very wonderful; the way in which great blessings are prepared for, and come about—are among the deep things of God.

Although it is crowded into a short space as to time, and a few words as to the chronicling of it, yet was there much here required, before this woman was brought into what was to be to her—the place and posture of great blessing. There was the frequent repetition of those cries of anguish, when we would have said that one request would have been enough—the indifference to them, and that no ordinary indifference, seeing that she cried to One who could help her (for He who can heal has, from that very power, a certain relationship to the one who requires that healing); and the natural uprising of hard thoughts about One who seemed so harsh to her—all this she had to undergo—but all to bring her nearer to the Lord.

Often we are inclined to say, "Why have I to bear this? What has this to say to the blessing I need? Is not this rather leading away from that blessing?" But each trial is a link in the chain of blessing, inexplicable in itself—yet beautifully harmonious as part of a whole.

All is thus done to bring us to the feet of Jesus. We must be in the right place—for certain blessings. We think we can place ourselves; the Syrophenician woman, no doubt, thought that to cry after Jesus was enough. And so it might have been, did God design no more for her, than the bare healing of her child; but she needed to be particularly placed for what she was particularly to receive. The "ten lepers, who stood afar off, lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said, Go show yourselves to the priests." They received their measure of blessing thus; but she hers—and that a greater one—at His very feet.

Once at Jesus' feet, there was much to follow. And it is important simply to note this, because we are apt to have very mistaken views as to finality. We are continually thinking that the end has come, before it really has. We make a part of a Divine process the end, and seem surprised when it does not answer our expectation. We are seeking the blessing before it is due; we have only gone once or twice; whereas, perhaps, seven times are appointed before we see even a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. And this is how many of God's people have been discouraged when seeking blessing. They expected too much from early stages; they never surmised that they had been brought to a certain point—just in order to be led on farther. And others are ignorant in this matter, as well as we. Their kind wishes for us are often mistaken. It is not in earthly relationships alone, that we find mistaken kindness; it abounds in spiritual relationships also, so far as they exist between man and man.

It is well that we have one who has deeper thoughts for us than our friends have—thoughts which reach farther, which are fuller of blessing, which in the long run will come out with larger profit—but it must be in the long run—it is of their very nature that they must mature. The disciples appear in this case to have been actuated by simply selfish motives. They did not want to be cried after, and therefore wished the woman to be given what she wanted, and sent away. Their idea was that in getting that, she would have received all; they did not know of anything beyond what just met the hearing of the ear—the need of the woman's child. As to any close contact with their Lord, and peculiar blessing in store for the woman therefrom—of that they knew nothing; as indeed, how could they.

Christ had deeper views for blessing this woman, than she had for herself—and so He has for us. It would have been easy for Him to have spoken a healing word, and so have ended up this matter with but little trouble to Himself, and with much satisfaction both to the disciples and the woman; but He had deeper thoughts of blessing for her than that. And so, when we do not receive all at

once the good thing we desire—but are left to cry still more vehemently for it; and it may be even to be much exercised in apparent repulses with reference to it, ever let us remember that this is because God designs more for us than in this matter, than we have planned for ourselves. We are now in the midst of the thoughts of God—as well as of our own; of His ways—as well as ours; and we have to experience that His ways are not as our ways, neither are His thoughts like our thoughts.

We now have this Syrophenician woman brought to the feet of Jesus—brought there by the apparent neglect of the One from whom she had hoped everything. Having not been answered a word, she does not, after the fashion of ordinary mendicants, go away, believing that it is but lost time to ask any more; on the other hand, she comes yet closer to Christ—closer to the One who had to all appearance practically refused her; and falling at His feet, she now bars the way, and He can proceed no further until He hears—and she knows that He hears her request; and until He answer her after some fashion.

Here, then, we have her; and seeing what sort of place is the ground immediately at the feet of Jesus, how tremendous was the need of this woman, and what a vantage ground she occupied—we may expect to hear of some very earnest travail—hard conflict, if need be—before she will give up her point and go away unblessed. The expectation is fully realized. Here we have the woman:

(1) remaining,

(2) arguing,

(3) enduring, (4) persevering, and (5) conquering— and all at the feet of Jesus.

There she remained. And it will be well for us to note this; for this "remaining" has more teaching for us than we think. It is not always so easy a thing to remain quiet at the feet of Jesus; to carry on much and varied effort there; to be calm and still within the one sphere. We find it very hard to harmonize energy and calmness—to make them work together. We are for shifting the scene of operations; we are, so to speak, up and down continually; we don't like to remain in the one necessary place. We would be much more calm—if we realized where we were. Our power lies not so much in what we are—as in where we are. Let the feet of Jesus be to us a place of continuance.

We trouble ourselves about the amount of effort we are making, whether we are earnest enough, and so forth. But in the truest need—the hardest work of the soul—there is no thought of SELF at all—all the eye, and ear, and thought are upon the LORD.

We never can be quiet, or put forth the power of quiet energy, unless we have well fixed before our minds the One from whom we are expecting help. Some rush hither and thither, like Balak—but they get no nearer blessing. We are to know where we are, and what is to be, and what can be done there. We have the advantage of having our field of action circumscribed, and marked out for us; now let us see what victories can be won there.

It may be that the intellectual think this position at the feet of Christ, is beneath them—that this sphere is too small for their energies. They say, "Talk to us about the head of Jesus, and not about His feet." But she who thus supplicated at Jesus' feet, was thought worthy of being argued

with—nay, was herself allowed to argue with the Lord, and to win in argument a victory—the like of which no lawyer has ever won in the courts, no orator in the tribune, no disputant in the schools. It was from the feet of Jesus that there was carried away the highest triumph of argument that was ever won. No excited crowds applauded; none crowned the victor; no one but her adversary in the argument, gave testimony to her skill; and when it is said that He did, then all is said which can be said; yes, far more than could be in all other ways beside.

Down at His feet—this woman won her victory of faith—her daughter's cure. Like Jacob of old, she would not let Him go, until He blessed her; like him she had power with the One with whom she strove, and prevailed. Sustaining two opposite characters in the self-same suit—plaintiff as regards her child, defendant as regards her race—she won her cause in each; a double judgment was entered in her favor by the Lord's command. If a miracle of healing proceeded from His lips—surely He must have inspired a miracle of pleading at His feet!

What had been this woman's introduction to the presence-chamber, where indeed things had fallen out so unexpectedly that, instead of simply receiving a munificence as from a king, she had to argue her cause as though she had to substantiate claims in court? Poor claims they were, no doubt—the claim of the dog to eat the crumbs which fell from the children's table. But the small possessions of the poor are infinitely precious to them; their heritage of crumbs is their very life. Her only introduction to the feet of Jesus—which, after all, was a royal presence-chamber—was by her misery. Misery is a strange steward—but it is a high officer in the court of Jesus; it is one of the grand stewards, and it has authority at all times to introduce to audience with the King. Am I miserable—I ask not from what cause—but am I miserable—then by that very fact I am sure, if I desire it, of an immediate introduction to the presence of my Lord. The misery itself supplies the means.

Diverse people were treated differently when they came to Christ—though each one doubtless was treated exactly as his case required. And so we cannot say, when once there, what may go on. Only we know that, whatever it is, it will be exactly what is right, and what in the end will be best for us. No doubt there are many arguings and soul-strivings carried on at the feet of Jesus. It may even be that the heart's fiercest battles have been experienced there. And here this woman has to argue—and mark where—at the feet of Jesus. It was when Christ might have been supposed to want to proceed on, she was exactly in the place where she was likely to impede Him most.

It is as though we were to be taught, that Jesus has no occupations of too great importance to be arrested by human, even by individual misery. We have such occupations in action, often such pre-occupations of mind—that we must not be stopped by anyone, or for anything. That is just one of the differences between Christ and us.

One would have thought that while Jesus was on kept standing there—that all this argument might have been dispensed with. But He Himself, who alone could dispense with it, did not do so; that dealing with that woman's heart, was no lost time to Him. In all probability, in human judgment—in that of the disciples—the whole thing was most inappropriate. The woman had gone from bad to worse; whereas she had been crying after Him, now she was prostrate before Him. But Christ had work to do with this woman's soul, which they knew nothing of; and surely He also commences in a way which they could not understand. It was a strange way to prepare for conferring a gift—by

giving what seemed an unanswerable reason why the gift should not be conferred. But some of the highest gifts which men have ever had, they have come by in this way. They were emptied—that they might be filled; they were pressed hard against the earth—that they might spring up the higher from it.

Christ tells this woman that she has no national claims upon Him at all. The statement of her being a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation, or in other words, "a stranger," comes very quick upon the mention of "Jesus' feet," and her position at them, suggesting to us how entirely—humanly speaking—she had no business there. But she drew an argument from her very unworthiness and alienship. She seized instantly upon that idea of the dogs, and of the children being filled, and of their being filled first. There was hope for her in these three points. She, on her part, recognized the priority of the children's claim, and their claims to fullness—but then came the claim of the dogs. Even the word used for "dogs" gave her an argument—for it was a soft, mild term the Lord used—the little dogs.

Now here we are met with a multitude of practical thoughts. When we come to the feet of Christ, let us remember, first of all—to take up our assigned position, however low it may be. What, indeed, must be our frame of mind, how little can we know ourselves, if we are laying claim to anything in the way of personal worth or position at all! We can gain no advantage by refusing to take up our assigned place—our low starting-point; we only lose time, we only lay ourselves open to the still sharper dealings of God. It may be that, we think we are put in a hopeless position by being thrust down so low; but let us remember from what depths—up to what heights, men have sprung—how that publican who smote upon his breast returned to his house. This woman was put at the very extreme end of creation—the Scripture always speaking as badly as possible of "dogs," and not recognizing any of their nobler qualities. It was thence—and what a "thence"—that in one bound she sprang to the forefront among the children of faith. Having taken something even more humble than the lowest room, she heard a voice which said unto her, "Friend, come up higher." The master of the feast set her—a stranger—above many of those who were his kinsmen according to the flesh. He gave her, not crumbs—but bread; the last became the first; and her victory of faith carried away as its lawful spoil—her daughter's cure.

Let us be encouraged then to seek for much, even when under deep consciousness of our unworthiness and guilt. Let us not say, "I will seek for such and such choice blessings—when I feel myself worthy and strong as a child of God. I will put off asking any great thing until I feel myself thus strong, and am in the special enjoyment of the sense of acceptance." Let us seek for what we want—as we are. Perhaps we have been placed in a depressed condition, or allowed to come into it for a while—in order that we may the more deeply feel our need, and the more earnestly, and so effectually, plead with God. Many a Christian's experience is this: "If I had not fallen so low—I would have not climbed so high." But when we come to the feet of Jesus—we must be like this Syrophenician woman—and not to allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by our need, however great. But we are to be honest, and to try and see things as they really are, and to recognize and make use of such hopes and openings as exist. This woman, as we have already incidentally noticed, found three points of hope—three grounds of argument—in her own and her daughter's behalf—out of the one sentence addressed to her by Christ.

Jesus said, "Let the children first be filled." The point was, not that there is nothing for anyone else—but that abundance must be secured for the children, and this "first." And this "first" implied a sequence. As soon as that was done, an opening was made for something further; that word "first," if only the woman had power to see it, was the possible opening of a floodgate of blessing. Could we have entered the recesses of the heart of Christ—we would have heard there the echoes of the words of Hosea: "Though I lead her into the desert—yet I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Achor (Trouble) into a gateway of hope." And here was this woman's Valley of Achor, only in her case the darkness and the light did not keep apart—but, as it were, intermingled, so that to one who could discern them, there were clouds and sunshine at the same time.

Now, it is a great thing to have an eye for encouragement—to see hope and openings where they are, to be quick to catch up crumbs of comfort. It is very honoring to Christ—for us to deal with Him with a hopeful spirit—to approach Him with such; and even if things do not seem to go as well with us as we desire, still to persevere.

We do not say that the materials for hopefulness always lie on the surface; they certainly did not do so in this case. They may have to be searched for; but, even though often it may be in the most unlikely places—they will be found. Many of God's choicest things are found in such places. There was Elijah's provision by that poor widow; and that piece of silver in the fish's mouth; and that feeding of the multitude by those five loaves and two small fishes; and here the blessing, in what at first sight, one might almost be warranted in calling a curse. In all our times of trial and depression—let us be on the look-out for the sun-gleams. No matter how few they are, still wonders may be done with them if they are used. The prize flower at a recent exhibition in London, was one grown in an attic, on which the sun shone for but a short time every day. But the old man who reared this plant held it up during that time to catch the beams, and turned it round and round, and won the prize. Watch for sunbeams; use them, and you shall win with them.

Believe that there is something to come; or, at any rate, that something may come. Have great faith in possibilities, especially when Christ is on the scene of action. This woman believed in the possibility of something after the "first." She did not dispute the "first," she only fixed her hope on what might come after that.

Let us avoid the mistake of undervaluing 'possibilities', let us see things as large as they really are. The crumbs here alluded to, are said to be something more than what fell accidentally from the table, for it was the custom during eating to use, instead of a napkin, the soft white part of the bread, which, having thus used, they threw to the dogs.

We do not want to diminish anything from the severity of the trial of the woman's faith, or make Christ's dealing with her less sharp and apparently severe than it really was. What we say is that, here were the elements of some comfort, and it was her wisdom and blessing that she realized them. The same remark applies to the Greek word which, when translated literally, means "little dogs"—or "pups". Here we discern a touch of kindness; for when, except for dealing with sin, was Jesus unmitigatedly severe? That little cloud was the beginning of abundance of rain. The nucleus of blessing is often very small; crumbs picked up at the feet of Jesus turn miraculously to loaves. Never be afraid of using to the uttermost any bright thought which is suggested to you there. When Christ gives you a bright thought, or puts within your reach the material of hope, be it never so

slight—it is that you may weave a net therewith—to enfold Him hand and foot, so that He cannot part from you without a blessing.

Thus this woman remained and argued at the feet of Jesus. Now we must add a few words upon her endurance of apparent repulse.

There was one terrible element in her trial which we must note. She was not spurned to the feet—but at the feet of Jesus. Her worst trial came upon her there. And had that woman come away unblest from that place, and had not all this been but a deep, dark gorge on the highway of blessing—then we are bold to say that no man can calculate what would have been the terrible results. For proud sinners fixing on that scorn of the Lord would never subject themselves to an endurance of the like; and men of feeble hope would feel the hopelessness of going there; and those of tender constitution of heart, and of an anxious temperament, would never adventure a conflict with such roughness. But now we understand it all, or at least enough of it to make us feel there is no real cause for fear. We are on the safe and right road, though some of the stones on it are sharp. This experience of the Syrophenician woman, tells us to avoid the mistake of always expecting dealings of unmingled brightness at the feet of Jesus. He has many strange dealings with people—to bring them to His feet. Likewise, Jesus has many strange dealings with people—when at His feet. The reader of these lines, if he knows much of the spiritual life, would lay down these pages as unreal, or would receive what they have yet to say with distrust—if we made out that unmingled brightness was the characteristic of all dealings at Jesus' feet.

But, however dark may be the things which are there shown us about ourselves, blessing is not on that account about to be withheld. When Joseph "spoke roughly" to his brethren—he was still their brother, and was planning great things for them. There are certain blessings, doubtless, which can come only by rough experiences. The heroes of faith, like all other truly great people, have ever borne, as well as done—much. The sustainings are as wonderful as the accomplishments in the spiritual life. When Jesus gave a hard saying, many asked, "This teaching is hard! Who can accept it?" And when it became still more incomprehensible, "they went back and walked no more with him." "Therefore Jesus said to the Twelve—You do not want to go away too, do you? Simon Peter answered, Lord, who will we go to? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that You are the Holy One of God!" John 6:67-69. The faith of the Canaanitish woman, and that of the prince of the apostles, was one—they each bore up under the hard sayings of the Lord, and refused to go away. So she persevered, and won the blessing she desired. It was on this occasion as on others—great miracles, and good doings, and outflowings of blessing, followed on times of, as it were, personal withdrawals on the part of Jesus. It was after a withdrawal of Himself—that the multitudes were fed, and that He appeared walking upon the waters. It was when He made as though He would go farther—that He yielded to constraint, and revealed Himself as He had not done all the time He had spoken with them by the way.

All withdrawals of Christ, rightly interpreted, are real onleadings. In Solomon's Song, when the bride sought her beloved—but could not find him—then she rose and went about the city in the streets; and in the broad ways she sought him whom her soul loved.

"It is expedient for you," said the Lord Himself, "that I go away"—for thus the Holy Spirit came, and the heart is led onward to an ascended Christ in higher conceptions of Him than it could have had, if He had tarried here.

We would observe in closing our contemplations on this scene, how we are taught that there is mercy at the feet of Jesus—for those whom we perhaps think to be outside all possible circle of blessing. The highway and the hedge teach us this—and so does this story of the Syrophenician woman at the feet of Jesus.

Let us also see how that very often our judgment about strugglers may be altogether wrong. We know not why they are struggling, or what purposes of mercy are wrapped up in it, or how it will end. The exercises of a soul are among the hidden things of God. Of one thing alone, let us assure ourselves on these occasions, and let that reassure us—is all this really going on in the right place? For all striving must prosper in the end, which is carried on at the "feet of Jesus."

01.05. Chapter 5 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

Chapter 5 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

"When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet and told Him—Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died!" John 11:32 When the wind agitates the surface of a lake, in whose placid waters are reflected the mountainsides in their strength, and the sky in its beauty, their images first become broken and confused, and finally disappear. The real mountains are there—as strong as ever; and when the waters become smooth again, they will appear as they did before; but for a moment they are gone. This is an apt image, in some respects, of what happens in our own spiritual lives. Circumstances arise which agitate us for a season—and all our tranquility seems gone; we are no longer ourselves, we do not act in harmony with the habit of our past lives. We are lacking to our best selves, and have to endure all the troubles which belong to an agitated state. But in a true character, there are all the elements of restoration; the strong mountains are really there; they will re-manifest their existence as soon as the storm is past.

Here we come upon a scene of agitation and distress; and as is so often the case, precisely where we would not have expected to find it. We would have thought that Mary would have presented us with nothing but a picture of calm. Having seen her sitting at the feet of Jesus, when Martha was so disturbed, we would have prepared to take our lesson from her in such a scene as this—in the direction of calmness, and self-possession, and peace; but it is just here, as it is in so many instances in the teachings of God—we are led by ways which we know not, the teaching comes to us in a very different way from what we expected.

We have been taught by Mary's sitting—now let us learn from her falling at Jesus' feet.

Every verse of this narrative is full of teaching—its own distinctive teaching; but we shall confine ourselves to such thoughts as suggest themselves in immediate connection with the position in which we find Mary here.

We shall first note what immediately preceded Mary's going forth to meet Jesus; and then her words and her position at His feet. When Martha called Mary secretly—she arose quickly, and without confiding to any of the attendant mourners the reason for her acting so suddenly and with such haste—she left the house. Those who mourned with her must have been astonished—but they were not long in finding out a probable cause for her conduct. She was, doubtless, seized with a paroxysm of grief, which could be relieved only at the tomb, by the nearest possible approach to the dead.

Here, as in the case of Jairus' daughter, we have a strong contrast between the many and the one—the impotence of the many—the omnipotence of the one. All that the minstrels and people could do in the one case, was to make a noise; all that they could do in the other case, was to go

after the heart-wounded one to a grave; but in each case Jesus brought with Him life, for that which we can only mourn—He can restore.

Many Jews came to comfort Mary, "The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw that Mary got up quickly and went out. So they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there." John 11:31 No doubt they were sincere in their desire to mitigate her sorrow—each had his own argument, his own aspect of comfort to present, or at least his own reason why sorrow should be assuaged. Perhaps there were even some, who knew the mystery of silence, and were able to sit still, and speak not a word, except such words as looks, and the mere consciousness of the presence of sympathy can utter. But they had evidently been able to do but little, for when Mary rose hastily to go forth and meet Jesus, they thought her grief had mastered her, and that she was going to vent it at the tomb.

There is something no doubt pleasing in the thought, that rays of human sympathy should converge from a wide circumference upon one focus of sorrow. It reminds us of our common humanity—that in the depths (whatever surface distinctions there may be) human kind are one—that as the poet says, "One touch of nature makes us all akin". And no doubt all sharing of each others joys and sorrows, will prove helpful so far to our rejoining some of the myriad threads of our humanity which are broken or cut in all directions. Still, sad thoughts connect themselves with the one in sorrow, and the many comforters. For what the heart craves in the depth of its sorrow—is not to spread itself out to many—but rather to gather itself in, and hold companionship with but few. Deep streams run in narrow water courses.

There is indeed a brawling noisy sorrow which from its very shallowness is heard here and there and everywhere—but it is different from what Mary had here. Her heart, doubtless, sat loose to all the comforters around; and so was all the more ready to leap forth to Him who had her truest deepest sympathy, who, because He had in His keeping all the secret springs of her being—could comfort her indeed.

Now, while we would be far from undervaluing or casting off human sympathy, we cannot but feel conscious that it is well to sit loose to it. Or, let us put the matter in another form; we cannot but feel how little in the hour of our sorest need, it can do for us. It is precious in its place; but we shall remain unsatisfied if we have no more.

Mary knew of One who was superior to all all the others combined; and when He came near, she was ready immediately to leave all around, and go forth to Him. No doubt, the previous knowledge of the feet of Jesus was silently exerting its power. Those feet at which she had sat—had now approached her house; they were standing waiting for her, not very far off; she was going forth on no sentimental journey—they said she was going to the grave to weep there—but she was going not to the home of death—but to the Lord of life.

It is true they were right in one respect, she was going 'to weep;' but it was one thing to weep simply at a grave, it was another to do so before the Lord of life. We may weep before each—but which it is, makes a vast difference indeed. But we are anticipating. What we desire for the reader is, not only that he should be visited by Jesus, in the time of his sorrow—but that when Christ comes to him—it should be as one well-known.

Many have made their first acquaintance with Jesus in this sad time; they are happy in having done so; but they are not the happiest of all. They are happier still, who have met him in sorrow—as a well-known friend. And for this very reason among others, let us now like Mary sit at the feet of Jesus, so that He may come to us as a known friend in our sorrowing times, so that we may not have to say 'Who is this that is come—who is this that is calling us out of ourselves?' but, 'It is my friend Jesus, I will go forth at once to Him!' And of how much—what a wonderful much can we dispense, if we have Christ Himself. Mary could leave all her friends—for Him. As Jesus had food to eat that His disciples knew not of—so Mary had a friend at hand, whose friendship was such as they knew not of.

If then in our times of sorrow and trial, we would not be perhaps helplessly dependent on mere human sympathy, let us strive so to sit at Jesus' feet, that His coming to us at these sad times may draw us to Him at once. However Jesus may choose to act for us, we must leave altogether with Him—only we may be sure that, if we know Him, and are ready when He calls for us to go forth to Him—that it will be always a leaving of a company of mourners—to go into the presence of the Lord of life!

"Supposing that she was going to the tomb to cry there." The many Jews had come to comfort. They recognized the deep need, which now however it seems, they are not able to supply. Mary's grief has overflowed their resources, and she apparently goes to the tomb to weep there.

These friends of Mary spoke according to the probabilities of the case, doubtless according to what under similar circumstances, they would have done themselves. They did not know that Mary had been called for by Jesus; nor if they had known it, could they have told how much was involved in it.

Those who do not know our intimate connection with Jesus—do not know our resources. Their thoughts end with the natural; they can go all the length to which that reaches—but not further. To those comforting Jews, there was no comforting point beyond that grave of Lazarus—there was no alleviation beyond weeping there. The dead was beyond all reach—but the sorrow which mourned for him, might find a home at his grave. But whatever they said, Mary does not appear to have heeded it, one thought filled her mind, and quickened her steps—that was to get into the presence of the Lord! And now Mary has hastened and come into the presence of Jesus, and what she does is to fall at His feet—to weep; and to cry that, had He been at Bethany—her brother would not have died.

What Mary said and did at those feet, is full of teaching to us. And first let us look at who it is that thus hastens away, and cast herself down at the feet of Jesus.

It is Mary—the calm—the contemplative—the self-possessed; the still one, who sat at the feet, who is now in such haste.

Those whom we think are the calmest—are often capable of the greatest emotion, activity, and excitement, which we would have thought utterly foreign to their nature. We often judge people as to what they possibly can do or leave undone, by the aspect in which they habitually present themselves to us—but we do not know how vehemently and in what an opposite direction they may be moved by circumstances. In Mary's case there seems to have been a mingling of the natural and the spiritual—of intense human feeling, and also true spiritual sensibility; she went

forth to meet Jesus, with both Lazarus and Jesus occupying chief places in her heart. Would Jesus have had it otherwise? Would He have had her violate all the feelings of human nature? Was He so jealous as not to leave any sympathy, even for mourners? Did He expect her to think of Him alone—when He called for her, and when He saw her hastening to His feet? No! Christ is no stifler of genuine emotions! He is the regulator of human emotion; He had no blame for Mary; He received her as she came; He mingled His tears with hers.

Let us be careful how we form too decided an opinion about some who appear to us somewhat abstracted, and contemplative, and separated from the wear and tear of ordinary life. It by no means follows that their natural feelings and emotions are dead—that they cannot feel themselves, and feel for others. We do not know what people are, or are capable of—until the circumstances fitted to try them, have occurred. When they do occur, we shall perhaps be surprised to find how full of emotion, or susceptibility to personal suffering, or how capable of sympathy such and such a person is.

Moreover let us never seek to be so contemplative, and enrapt, as to be above human joy or sorrow. While we are here in this world, God wills us to be men—true men, even as Jesus was. Rightly to show ourselves capable of human emotion, is an infinitely truer position than to be independent or incapable of it. Neither let us seek a place at 'the feet' with the idea of raising ourselves out from affliction. We may seek a place there selfishly, from, perhaps unknown to ourselves, a low motive as well as a high one; for our poor hearts are liable to be deceived, and what is in itself very high motive, may be turned to a very low use; the thing may be the same—but its aim and end altogether different. In this respect the emotion of Mary on the present occasion is very precious, and it is made doubly so by that of Jesus. Mary wept, the Jews were weeping, Jesus weeps also.

It is important to observe that He has no chiding for those tears, and that impassioned falling at His feet. He has chiding for unbelief; for He presently says to Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (ver. 40.) It is not that He is so overcome with emotion, as not to discern anything faulty which may exist; it is that within the true limits of human sorrow, which He receives. And it is our belief, that Jesus desires that sincere human feelings to be brought into contact with Himself.

What kind of religion is that which says, 'I will reverence You with the abstract—but I will keep from You with all that in which I most truly live, and move, and have my being?' That religion would not be the religion of our very selves—it would be unreal. Jesus would say, you are weeping about an earthly trial, a wound to your affections, a loss, a difficulty, a need; and you are not coming to Me; I am not in the reality of your daily life—but only in the creeds and abstractions of your spiritual thoughts.

It must be either because we have mistaken notions about Christ, or are not sure of Him—that we keep so aloof from Him—that we do not rise up hastily and run to Him, and fall at His feet in the passion of our souls, in the deep emotions of our life. If we knew Him as well as Mary did—we would do as she did also! But before we part with Mary's haste, let us note two things:

(1) how she sped forth to the One to whom she could unbosom herself, as soon as she knew He was at hand;

(2) how quickly she left the many comforters for the One; that One being in Himself of more value than all the rest combined. This speedy going forth was no mere experiment on Mary's part. From what she had heard from Christ, sitting at His feet—she knew that her sorrow would have a place in His heart; a secret sympathy existed between her soul and His, which did not between her and all the other mourners.

We must likewise learn, that there is no one to whom we can fully unbosom ourselves, but Jesus. All deep sorrow ramifies into strata below the surface soil of human sympathy. It gets into our spiritual being; it has other life connection with us, which none but He who is God can understand; and that we feel and know. And in truth, though men do not always know it, that is why all mere human sympathy comes short. An unspiritual man may never know this, and so never seek for anything beyond the imperfect help of his fellow man; but even a spiritually minded man may not know it either. He knows it not theologically—but he does instinctively—an instinct of his being makes him seek Christ; and in that One he finds what all 'the many' could not supply.

Thus may it be with us in our deepest sorrowing times; may we feel that Jesus is able to penetrate into those depths of our being to which the sorrow reaches—and let us bring it to Him—just as it is. Let us not wait until it is toned down and moderated, and, as we would think, brought into a more seemly state for His presence; but let us come to Him with our sorrows—as we must with our sins—bringing them just as they are.

Now let us inquire what Mary said when she fell at Jesus' feet.

We have no record of any formal approach, of any actual words of reverential acknowledgment; the one act of falling at her Lord's feet, combined within itself at once her reverence and grief. And in truth what she said did the same. For in those words, "Lord if you had been here—my brother would not have died," she declared her belief in the power and love of that Lord, and her own bitter sorrow, that because He had not been on the spot—all was now hopelessly over, the beloved one had gone.

This—the saying of Mary at Jesus' feet—must now occupy our attention for a little while.

We observe that the two sisters, of wholly opposite characters, both say the same thing, "Lord if you had been here—my brother would not have died." No doubt this had been the theme both of the thought, and conversation of the sisters ever since their brother expired.

There had been anxious waiting ever since that touching message was sent off by the sisters to Jesus, saying, "Lord, behold he whom you love is sick!" Many a time, perhaps, they went out alone or together to look in the direction from which the welcome footsteps were to be expected; and questioned within their hearts, or one with the other, 'Will He come soon—why do His feet tarry, when the one He loves is sick unto death?' It may be that, they watched the ebbing tide of their brother's life, and asked each other how long he could hold out, and if he could do so until the Lord would come. But the Lord did not come. Weary hours stole on—but there was no sign of the One who could heal, and at last, the healing time had past, the death time came, yes, burial too. And not until all was over in the fullest sense—did Jesus come.

It is no wonder then, that each of the sisters used the same exact words when the Lord appeared; for their minds, and doubtless their words had been running in the self-same groove. But these

words are full of teaching for ourselves. And first let us note how each said, "My brother." There is something very touching in the death of Lazarus being not only a family loss—but an individual one. The family was made up of two 'mys.' Martha speaks of Lazarus as if he had been wholly hers, and Mary does the same; with each of them it is, "My brother." As the love had been in life, so is it spoken of in death.

Here we are brought into somewhat of a strait, for the two remarks which we wish to make seem as though they contradict one the other.

Happy is that family where each has such property in the other, that the very habit of thought leads to the use of the word MY.

Unhappy is that family where there is nothing but a series of "mys," where the meaning of "our" is not known as well as that of "my."

We doubt not that the 'our' as well as the 'my' was known and recognized, and that the power of it was lived in, in the family at Bethany; but now human grief was having its own way, and as is its custom, it concentrated the mind on personal feelings, and to some extent excluded the thought of others. And, in truth, that is one of the perils of grief—that nursing of it in our own bosom—that hugging of it to ourselves alone—that unwillingness to part with any of it, and to see that others are shipwrecked in it as well as ourselves.

Now let us contrast this 'my' of Mary, and also of Martha, with the 'our' of Jesus.

Jesus knew that Lazarus was dead. He also knew what individual love was, for we are told that He loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus; they are spoken of not as the family at Bethany—but one by one; but when He speaks to His disciples about the death sleep, He says not, "MY friend Lazarus has fallen asleep," but "OUR friend Lazarus has fallen asleep."

Happiest is that family where many 'mys' combine into many 'ours'; the two—each occupying its own place, giving the ideal of the 'family' in sorrow.

"Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." There is something very touching in that confidence, as there is in all the great confidences of love. Jesus must have felt it so. He saw His power over disease acknowledged; His love so reposed in, that it was thought impossible that it could allow any harm to happen to those who were loved; no note whatever is taken of what the virulence of the disease had been—had He only been there—all would have been well. And Jesus, we may be sure received that confidence as it was meant—the weight of the family's sorrow was not laid on Him in vain, especially when He knew that He could have been there—that He had purposely delayed.

One would have thought that Jesus would have been cut to the heart at hearing such words as these, when He knew well that He might have averted all this sorrow; and that it was owing to purposed delay on His part that Lazarus had died. But He was quite calm. We see that He was, by what happened between Him and Martha, when she used these exact same words; and when He replied to them.

We see here plainly how some of love's true thoughts, may however be only surface ones. Love is not the less real because it is shallow in the reach of its thought; it may be untrue in its reasoning,

and ill-informed as regards its knowledge, and yet be sterling and real in itself.

Now confidence—the confidence of love, even with a mistake, may often be better than suspicion with accuracy and correctness. Our mistakes concerning Christ are our ignorance; and there may be much ignorance without guilt; but our lack of trust and confidence, no matter what form it assumes, is our sin. There are simple people making great mistakes, who occupy a higher place in the kingdom of God than wiser ones, who are cold and calculating, and seeking to be in their religion, we might almost say 'mathematically correct'.

God is tender and patient with honest mistakes. If He were not, where would we be in our daily service, or our daily life.

"Lord, IF you had been here, my brother would not have died." And He might have been—but she did not know that; she did not know what had kept Him—we can scarcely speculate, as to how exactly she would have addressed Him, if she had known.

There are many things which it is well for us not to know, concerning which, if we did know all, a strange storm might arise in our minds. The fact is—we are surrounded with "ifs" in life, they are a continual element of vexation and perplexity; it would be an amazing source of peace and comfort if we could get rid of them altogether. This word "if" has had power to distract, to set up all sorts of speculation, to open many a door to unbelief, to aggravate the circumstances of many a trial.

We sometimes conjure up all sorts of possible, and at times, impossible "ifs;" and the one as vexing as the other. We have to do with things not as they might have been—but as they have been, or as they are; most of our "ifs" are little better than suggestions of better arranged providences, as though WE could have fitted matters in much better, than has been the case. In truth, many of our vexing and disquieting, and all our despairing "ifs" have a depth far below what we imagine; they go down into discontent with God's providence. It is not suggested that this was the case with Mary here—but it surely is so with us. And as in Mary's case, the "if" fixed her mind entirely on the past; so in our case it does the like, hiding out the restorations and life which may be even at the very threshold.

Martha seems to have passed altogether beyond her sister in this matter; for she immediately qualifies her "if," by a "but." "But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." The "if" can never be safely used, except with the quickly following "but." And now mark how Mary came to be at Jesus' feet. "When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet." When we saw her last, she was sitting at those feet, now she has fallen at them.

Such are the vicissitudes of the spiritual life. Where we are found sitting today, we may be found fallen tomorrow. The place of our rest may be that of our struggle; that of our peace, may become that of our agony. The fiercest throes of the soul—have been experienced at the feet of Jesus. They have not been felt in the conflicts with the tempter—but in heart sorrows with our greatest friend. It is indeed a wonderful sight to see a calm spirit—calm in the teaching learned at Jesus' feet, cast down there in bitter agony.

Whatever may be our spiritual destiny; with whatever shaking of soul we are to be tried—only let it be at the feet of Jesus. Whatever down- castings of soul I am to experience, only let them be there—there Mary wept; and Jesus wept too. In Mary, the anguish of grief blocked out for the

moment, the comfort she might have had. To weep in her Lord's presence, seemed all that she now could do. This was the only comfort she had, it was the natural effect of a natural feeling; and just shows us how little human nature can do for us in our deep trial times. The sympathy of feeling in Jesus was recognized. His power of help was clouded; in a word the natural was apparent, the supernatural was veiled. The time was one of great shaking of faith, and human reasoning was so in the ascendant, that faith had little place given it for working at all.

We should learn from the shortcoming of this sinner at Jesus' feet; we must seek in our trial times to recognize Christ in His entirety—His power of sympathy and help. It is by looking at Jesus in the perfect balance of His nature and perfections, in their fullness, that we find peace. No doubt it is often very little we can do when we get to the feet of Jesus, under circumstances similar to Mary's. We too are so agitated that we can only fall down and weep; we also have a clouded and shortened vision; we are encompassed with perplexities and "ifs;" yes, those "ifs" occupy our thoughts more than anything else. Well! be it so; yet to those feet let us come, with our agitations and our perplexities, if we have nothing else to bring—but our very selves. For after all, that is the great point—the bringing of our very selves. Let us not wait to get more faith, or the power of doing better before Jesus—it is ourselves that He wants.

It is quite true, better things might have been expected of us than we can show when we get there; we may not be able to act in a way at all proportioned to our advantages and opportunities. We may give cause for rebuke as Philip did, "Have I been so long with you, and have you not known me Philip?" but all this must be put down as so much loss and shame, and even with the loss and shame—we must be found in our great agitations at the feet of Jesus.

There indeed must we go; and may we however unconsciously, yet so act in sorrow as to draw others with us into the presence of the Lord, and make them witnesses of His work.

We know not what wonderful things may be shown to those who are brought into the presence of the Lord. Perhaps all that we on our part can show is sorrow, and poor weak faith. Some 'ifs' and small outputtings of sorrow—but we know not what He will do. Many may be brought to believe through our deep woe.

Setting aside, however, all else that has been advanced, great will be the profit of these lines, if they induce any believer in his time of agitation, when the still waters are broken up, to go just as he is, and cast himself with all his perplexity, his shortcomings of faith, and everything else—at 'the feet of Jesus.'

01.06. Chapter 6 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity

Chapter 6 The Feet of Jesus—the Place for Personal Necessity "And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word." Luke 10:39 The Word of God may be more fitly compared to a stream with all its variety of ripple, current, and depth, with all its diversity of wooded bank and pebbly strand—than to the ocean, all agitated—or calm—as far as eye can reach; and which, so far as we can see, either dashes itself in one long agony against the jutting cliffs, or sinks, subdued we know not how, upon the almost level shore. The Word is full of journeyings and restings, 'of war and peace,' of joyfulness and sighs; of darkness—from that of eventide, to that which can be felt; of lights—from that of day dawn, to the time when the sun is at its meridian. You can hear in it the minstrelsy of the lover, and the trumpet of the warrior, the chant for the bride, the wail for the dead. The records of infancy, and manhood, and old age are there, for the Scripture contains the story of man—yes, and much more is there, for it contains the story of man with God.

Even in this one subject of "The Feet of Jesus" is this great variety to be found.

Here are multitudes to be cast down in their sore need, here must come the solitary one in his woe. Here is the excited agony of the mother—here the calm rest of the Gadarene; here is one neglecting to give even water—here is another supplying its place with ointment and with tears; here is man dishonoring by nailing to a cross—here is God honoring by placing an angel guard in the tomb; here is the fear of a loving apostle—and the "fear not" of a still more loving master. The feet of Jesus are unchanged, even though they be now "like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;" they were always a place of grace on earth—and they are the same in heaven. This story of Mary at Jesus' feet is, as it were, one of the still deep pools which reflect the stars. It is not really still, for the current of the river is passing through it all the while—there was the flow of earnest life in Mary's soul, though her body was at rest. And we would have been glad to have had only to do with Mary—but that Martha comes and troubles this pool; and in part leads our minds, whether we will or not—away from the beautiful calm which her sister found at Jesus' feet. We might have wished it otherwise, yet many a one stepping in here, has found a Bethesda, in which he has been healed of an infirmity which he had. Our profit must not, however, be purchased altogether at Martha's expense. From time immemorial, she has afforded a theme to preachers, who would dissuade their hearers from an inordinate pursuit of worldly things; and she has suffered no little at their hands. To hear some people speak, one would think that in Martha there was no good thing, that she had not a soul above the food she served; but he who would understand Martha's fault, as we find it here, must know something of Martha herself; and to know what she was, would be obliged to read along with this story, what is written about her in John 11. This is the woman who said, "Lord if You had been here, my brother would not have died;" who said still more, "But I know that even now, whatever You will ask of God, God will give You;" who said as much as the boldest of the Apostles, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son

of God!"

We would willingly think solely of Mary and her Lord—but that is impossible; so let us range what we would to say under three heads:

Martha,

Mary,

Christ,

in which we shall find a position taken up, attacked, defended. But before we consider Mary at the feet—there kept by Christ, though attempted to be drawn away by Martha—let us pause a moment on the reception into their house.

Jesus "entered into a certain village, and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house;" the 'certain' village and 'certain' woman seem vague; but there was a precision about them both in the mind of Jesus—the 'certain village' was one which contained a hospitable house for Him; and the 'certain woman' was a well-known friend.

There are houses in the world which, to the ordinary eye, are in no wise different from others—but to Christ they are the houses of His friends. Looking down now from His height of glory—He knows them all. All the houses of a street are not alike to Him; in some He has a place—and in others none; in some He is known, honored, loved, received, served, and ministered to—and in others, His name is little more than recognized, even as it might have been in hundreds of houses of Judea.

There is not a village or hamlet—but that Jesus knows every house in it, in which He would be warmly received. And very humble are many of the houses of His friends—small roadside cottages—often little better than what we would call hovels—but they are different to Him from all other dwellings—they are the houses of His friends. In what light is my house viewed by Jesus? is a question we may well put to ourselves. Is He welcomed in it? Do I wish it to be a worldly home—or a Christ-like home?

If we wish our house to be Christ's, we know His ways—what would please Him, and what would not; we may have it so ordered, as to have it one which He would recognize as a welcome place—if He came our way.

We need not be solicitous about the size, or furnishings, or decorations of the earthly dwelling—for the little time we shall need it. The one point to be careful about is—is my house one that Jesus knows? Yes, has He friends here? Am I and my family, His friends? Are we well known to Him? Can I reverently say 'my house is His home?' This is but a passing thought—but it is a useful—it may be a very blessed one.

Here then in the house of His friends, is Jesus received. The reception of Jesus! At first sight the words would imply bustle and excitement, and the out-putting of great energies, and the making of great preparation. No doubt, it was so in Martha's mind, even when Jesus came to her in the lowliness of His manhood; how much more would it be so now, when it is impossible for us to dissociate Him from His sovereignty, and all the majesty which almost from our infancy we know to

be His. This is an instance—one of the many, in which our first impressions need correcting. And this one is worth correcting, for mistaken views about how Jesus can be most acceptably received—are keeping many from courageously opening all their heart-doors to Him, and asking Him in. In truth, the thought of our receiving Him, blessed and true though it be—is to be corrected and adjusted by the thought of His receiving us. Martha was full of the idea of 'receiving' Jesus; the corrective was supplied by her sister's 'being received' as a disciple and a learner, by the Lord. To 'give' to Jesus, is a high and indeed a natural impulse of a truly loving soul—for what kind of love is that, which does not delight in giving! But to 'receive' from Him is something higher, deeper and better in every way. Those who can pass beyond the outward and material substance of what is received, into the invisible, subtle and delicate feeling of right receiving, with all the emotions which belong to it, know a mystery of love indeed. The ancient alchemist spent a life-time in trying to turn baser substances to gold; but love's alchemy can turn a wild flower with no garniture but a dew drop, into a more precious gift than jewelry set with the most glittering of gems. This is beautiful—but it is rare; and it gives us a glimpse of how much of what is noble and precious. God has made possible to be linked to common things; and of how all this nobility and preciousness may be the property of the poorest as well as of the richest and great. But we must not follow out the thought. To return to the scene before us here, Jesus, who ever leaves a gift where He has been, will correct the exaggerated importance of giving, when put into competition with receiving. It is a deep lesson—one, the bare idea of which, many can scarcely even take in; but He knew its price, and He would teach it to the loved ones here.

Christ would correct the mistake—as to what will please Him most. He would show us, as we shall see presently, that we are likely to misunderstand Him. Martha's blame and Mary's praise are for all time—they are for the Church—they embody principles which in truth are everlasting.

Now, let us as we proposed, look at all three in order—and first as to MARTHA. Much has been said about the natural characteristics of these sisters. Martha has always been considered a woman of an active, bustling, energetic disposition; and so, no doubt, to a great extent she was. And expositors have frequently seen nothing more than these; and so have failed to draw any teaching from the narrative, except that, 'it is bad to be too much taken up with the things of time and sense.'

We accept this as in part, a description of Martha's character, and we desire to profit by the practical lesson grounded on it. But allowing full room for the difference between the natural characteristics of the sisters, we must go below them to discover the true teaching which we have here. They were sisters in blood—and, as we see in John 11, in faith; but they were dissimilar in character and temperament, and more important still, in depth of spiritual perception and attainment. This last is the true key to the story; and we have to deal, not with a worldly and a spiritual person as antagonistic the one to the other—but with two dear children of God, and lovers of Jesus—only in different stages of development; and so, looking from different standpoints at their Lord. As our concern now lies with Mary rather than Martha, we may content ourselves with this statement, only drawing attention to a teaching from the fact that Martha and Mary were sisters, and dwelling in the one house.

If between these two, dwelling under the same roof, we perceive such a difference; what diversity may we not expect to find among many in the same Church! And let us beware of falling in our

own day and among those with whom we have to do, into the mistake which is so commonly made about the sisters of Bethany. As people forget the 11th chapter of John, and almost degrade Martha from being a disciple at all; so are some inclined to almost unchristianize those whose experience is not the same as theirs! We may, indeed, recognize the being troubled about many things, we may not sympathize with it, we may have risen above it. But the Martha we despise—is dear to Jesus! Yes, (even as in the 11th chapter of John,) she can on an emergency rise to a great height of faith. Our readiness to disown each other in the large circle of the Church of God—whether from the Martha or the Mary side, may find its correction here.

Let the reader also note the different degrees of attainment in these two sisters. And with the difference of attainment came that of development and practice. It may not be, that Mary loved Jesus any more than Martha—but only that her spiritual apprehension and the development of her spiritual life were greater. So is it often now—spiritual apprehension is not always manifested in personal affection; no doubt this causes loss—but thanks be to God, it does not invalidate love. But now we pass to MARY. She was the one found at the feet of Jesus, and therefore with her we have principally to do.

First then, as to the POSITION she took up. It is sometimes helpful to look at what a thing is not—as well as at what it is. This was not an indulgence of sentimental affection towards Christ; nor of personal ease as regards herself. Either would have put her in the place of rebuke, instead of defending her. Christ would have estimated the first at what it was worth; and the second He would have severely condemned. In all probability, had either been the position of Mary at this time, He would have answered her sister's complaint very differently from the way in which He did, and told the one at His feet, to stir herself, and attend to her part, in that at least which was needful, in the household work.

There is a certain kind of sentimental affection towards Christ, which may be mistakenly taken for solid love; but He knows exactly what it is, and does not countenance it. Mere sentimentality is a sickly washy thing—and confers no honor on the Lord. In truth what Mary had was the highest of all devotion, that of the mind and soul. She was all alive in them—to outward appearance she was merely sitting at Jesus' feet—but her inmost being was waiting upon Him with all its powers.

She had more to do with action than her sister knew. For what was she then doing, as she sat at the feet of Jesus—but receiving those blessed seeds of truth into an honest and good heart, which were doubtless destined to mature into action later. Martha's love was showing itself in giving what could be seen—Mary's love, in taking in the unseen. Martha's love was spending itself—Mary's love was gathering in for greater spending by and by.

Mary, we may be sure, knew more than Martha of the inner mind of Jesus; that it was His great pleasure to give and not to receive—that the choicest foods of this world—were nothing compared with the least nourishment of the soul—that His very presence allowed of lawful expectation. She took up the position of a receiver of Christ's loving-kindness—an embracer of spiritual opportunity—an expecter of out-flowings of love. She was, in truth, a great honorer of the wayfaring, the outcast—and almost wandering Jesus. The position which the great men of her country despised, was the very one she took up—at the feet of Jesus. And how did she come to do so? She had evidently seized an opportunity. And why did she?

Perhaps Jesus had begun to speak, and attracted by what He said—she placed herself where she would not miss a word. Or it may be that, from former experiences of Him, she at once took up the loving listener's place, expecting, that as formerly, so now, she would get blessing.

It was a position in which she made much of Jesus—in the way in which He wishes to be made much of; in which she manifested the higher appreciation. Had Mary not been sitting all eager and intent at Jesus' feet, she would have been with Martha in full activity of service. She is only not with Martha for Christ, because more immediately with Christ Himself. She saw Jesus in His true character, the giver rather than the receiver—the One honored more by receiving from—than giving to. And how far do we know this truth? How far have we entered into what we might call the heart of Jesus? Can we perceive that 'giving' is almost as it were—a very necessity of His life. Our little spendings have their place, and a very blessed one in the mind of Jesus; but we must never put them in competition with Him; nor may we allow them to take the place of His. But alas! are there not some, who are neither giving to Jesus, nor receiving from Him—into whose house, whose heart, He has never come! If, by any means this is so with the one who reads these lines, let it be so no more!

There is no one who will value what you do for Him as Jesus will; no one who will give to you as He will; no one who will consecrate your house as He will. Do not say that you must be of the world, for your business or your family leave you little time for Christ. Nay, even when you are doing your mundane business—be for Jesus. See the price He put upon the heart; and even if you cannot do much for Him, let Him do much for you.

Let Him be welcome in your house, and if you have no house, then in your room; and if you have no room, then by your bedside, or to your thoughts, as you lie upon that bed itself! But chief above all, let Him be welcome to your heart—there is His house, where He is received with honor and joy, in your ministrings and the listenings, the activities and the rest of your love. The position thus devotedly taken up by Mary, is now assailed by Martha. It was then as it is now, who can quietly take up a position of peaceful learning at 'the feet of Jesus,' without its being disturbed by somebody!

There is evil enough in this mistaken attack of Martha's, without more being added to it by expositors. She was not wholly engrossed with selfishness as some would think; probably she was not selfish in the matter at all; nor was she of necessity intent on making a display; she was for honoring her Lord, only in her own way—and that was not the way most acceptable to Him.

There was that which was good, and there was that which was bad, in her assault on Mary. There was her desire to honor Christ—but there was the ignorance of the way in which He could be more highly honored; there was the dogmatic putting of her own standard of duty—a duty which she was endeavoring to perform even beyond her strength; but there was also a non-recognition of anything higher, of anything beyond.

It is just what we see every day; and what, if we are not on our guard against it, we find creeping continually upon ourselves. And the more we are individually interested in any branch of work, or in any experience of feeling—the more likely are we to make our work and feelings—the standards for all others.

Martha wished Christ to be served in her own way; she was intent on it. It may be that, in part she was under the influence of her natural character as an active homemaker, and wished that all that politeness could do, would be put forth—and it was for the honor of her Lord. Those dishes were to be dressed for and set before Him. And so far, her thought was good.

Overstrained good may, however, become evil. Some of the most subtle and best masked evil—is nothing but this; and Martha so magnified her own position and work—as to have no eye for, no understanding of, Mary's position and work.

She had no calm judgment; and probably after some waiting, and some considerable preliminary making of preparations, at last she spoke with her tongue; and ran, so to speak, full tilt against Christ Himself. "Don't you care," (is it nothing to you,) that my sister has left me to serve alone?" Martha did what many a one attempts now—she tried to enlist Christ in her quarrel. She would have made Him a partizan.

Martha thought she was strong in the feeling and judgment, which He must have on the matter, and in the claims of human relationship, "my sister," "me;" yes, and in the mixed feelings of indignation, and justice, and pity, which are summed up in the word 'alone;' and in truth, the onslaught was severe; and had there not been something more powerful to counteract it, must have prevailed.

Like Martha, we are often going further than we think; we are unconsciously but really, wounding Christ Himself. We are for dragging Him into conflicts which are utterly distasteful to Him; we are arguing petty claims of our own—and bringing them into competition with His! What what they have to do with Christ? The defence of Mary by Christ, was a discriminating and a decided one.

Jesus did not ignore Martha; He noted all about her, and addressed her position—as well as Mary's. The perception and statement of Mary's immeasurable superiority, did not induce Him to pour contempt on Martha, whose fault was, not work—but being overburdened in it. Here, Jesus gave us the true rule of action. We must never despise, never ignore the position of an adversary, or the adversary himself. On the contrary, we must enter as far as possible into his views of matters, before we judge them.

Jesus notes that Martha would have supplied Him with many things. For whom were they all—but for Himself! But they brought on her— anxious care and trouble; she let her natural energy no doubt go out into them—but it had overwhelmed her.

Jesus knows the caring and the troubled ones, as well as those who are in deeper fault; on the one hand, He will not fail to condemn an error—just because it is entertained on His behalf. On the other hand, He will not, because it is an error, refuse to give credit for what there is in it of good. But Jesus was very decided; it "shall not be taken away from her." I will not take her good part away from her—you shall not— and circumstances must not.

No! Jesus will never send us forth from Himself, to be drawn around in a whirlpool. I do not say He will not send us forth in proper season to work, even as he did the demoniac; but He will not fall in with the mistakes of energetic and misguided people, as they would wish. Martha would have involved Mary in the same whirl that she was in herself.

Therefore there is great encouragement here to our aiming at some close communion with the Lord. He will not send us away. He knows the longing of our souls; that we are craving to be fed and taught by Him Himself; that we feel that none can satisfy us but Himself. Blessed are such hungry ones—for they shall be filled.

Thus, they who gather themselves in to rest at the feet of Jesus, have no need to fear that they will be upbraided by Him. At the proper time He will send them forth to their work—as He did the demoniac; but He will not have them vexed for every excitement that comes their way. And as He will not Himself take away the rest of His people, no more will He allow others to do so. Martha sought a commission so to do to Mary—but Jesus refused to give it. And there are some who seem to have avocation for stirring up everybody, and almost everything, too. They know neither the power nor the pleasure of rest; their tremendous energy, or their irritable restlessness, would carry away, or fret others whose chief power and life is in the peace of God. From such we may take refuge in Christ Himself. But He will do even more than give us this. He will defend us from circumstances. He says, 'they shall not be able to take you from My feet.'

Now, it often happens that circumstances appear to involve great need—and to call upon us to engage in them. But is this need always so real? is the necessity invariably laid on us? Some people think so; and the consequence is that they leave the feet of Jesus, scatter themselves, and become shallow; they are to be found in everything—and so is their heart! The apparent need is not always a real one; it was not so here. Had it been, Christ would have sent Mary at once to her sister's help; but He refused to fall in with Martha's mistake. Christ discriminated and judged in this matter; and He will teach us to do the same. But the Lord's defense of Mary was reasonable, as well as decided. It might be said, was not Mary to be concerned with the hospitality of the house—as well as Martha; of Christ's having the very best in every way which it could afford; that best, made the best indeed by all the care and pains which they could bestow upon it?

Yes! Mary was as jealous of the hospitality of the house as Martha; but she had so overpassed Martha in spiritual apprehension, that she knew that to be at the Savior's feet was more acceptable to Him, than to be engaged in preparing many choice dishes for Him.

She had not grasped the great outlines of truth any more clearly or boldly than Martha; the 11th chapter of John would teach us that. But the spiritual perceptive faculty was more delicate with Mary, and it enabled her to discriminate between seeming neglect and real honor.

Mary was in truth giving far more than Martha; she was giving her very self, in that form which is most precious to Christ—as a receiver of Himself. On this giving of ourselves, Leighton has the following beautiful words: "Let us give Him ourselves, or nothing; and to give ourselves to Him is not His advantage—but ours. Thus does a Christian make himself, his daily sacrifice—he renews his gift of himself every day to God. Now that whereby we offer all other spiritual sacrifices, and even ourselves, is love. That is the holy fire which burns up all, sends up our prayers, and our hearts, and our whole selves a burnt-offering to God!" In the last day will it revealed—how much some have given, who had but little in external religious services. And great encouragement may be gathered here, for those who have not much outwardly to give. Some are prevented by illness, by circumstances, from doing much outwardly. We do not say their case is that which is spoken of here; but that they also may gather incidentally some comfort.

Everyone who has HIMSELF—has much to give! Everyone who can appreciate Jesus, listen to Him, lovingly trust Him—has, in all that, opportunity of honoring the Lord. Such people may be misunderstood, or possibly despised, by the religious world—but they will be vindicated by Him. Had we not intended to speak of the Lord separately, some of what we are now about to say would have been noticed when considering Mary. JESUS Himself was mistaken and misjudged. "Is it nothing to You?" said Martha. She formed a wrong judgment of Christ. She did not see those deeper interests, that greater honor, that profounder relationship, which He did; and which He recognized by keeping Mary at His feet. This is exactly how it comes to pass—that we so often wrong the Lord. It is simply out of shallowness and ignorance.

We, in point of fact, often say to Him, "Do You not care? Is it nothing to You Jesus?" Because He is not acting for us, or by us, as we would have Him to do—that we charge Him with thoughtlessness of us!

"Do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone!" She only saw her sister in relationship to herself—not to Christ! and spoke in her claims accordingly. No doubt it was in order that Christ would be served with the many things that Martha wanted Mary's help; but she brings herself as 'left,' prominently forward; and in the mention of "my sister,"—the human relationship, we see a claim put in, in competition with Christ's!

If a mere man had been in the Lord's place—how differently would he have acted. He would, in all probability, have fired up in indignation; he would have asserted the claims of his personal dignity; but Jesus vindicates Mary—and not Himself. He passes by the personal affront, 'do you not care;' and throws His shield over the one who sat listening at His feet.

Jesus was here, as ever, forgetful of His own self. So far as principle was involved, and truth—He vindicated them by the way in which He spoke of Mary's better part; but He did not mention Martha's attack upon Himself.

There are many teachings for us in this.

We are taught to vindicate truths—rather than ourselves; to pass by what is merely personal—even though it be unjust. This is very hard to do. Yet Jesus did it, and that, often under circumstances of great provocation. Let us try to do the same.

We see here how He put the hunger and thirst of Mary's soul and its refreshment, before those of His own body, and its needs. His contentment with what was simple, His forgetfulness of SELF in the willing loss of an elaborate feast. Martha, if she could have seen it, together with Mary at His feet, and but a single dish to satisfy hunger—would have been more acceptable to Jesus—than all the preparations which both Martha and Mary could have made! And so, there is great encouragement to us to invite Jesus into our poverty. However poor may be our circumstances, if we have ourselves to give—we have what He requires; for He seeks not what is ours—but us! And it is important to observe His recognition of the worth of that which is communicable from Himself. He vindicates those who are appreciating Him, not feebly, or theoretically, or as a matter of course—but in the full power of the consciousness of how wise they are—what good they get.

He knows that they get good from Him—as distinguished from mere channels; that there is a deep need of our drawing personality and directly from Him; that there is a communion with Himself

which is independent of all mere channels; and He defends those who appreciate being near His very feet—His self and heart.

It is of as much importance to us that—Christ would know how well He can supply, as that He would know how great is our need; His riches—as well as our needs. For He will always put the two together; each would be strong alone; but each acquires fresh, yes, doubled strength, when brought into connection with the other. And it will be well for us to act on this knowledge. Let us often plead Christ's wealth with Him; let us bring it forward as a reason why much should be poured out to us; let it excite our expectation. Humanly speaking, the more people have—the more is expected from them. Spiritually speaking, the more we know of Christ's wealth, the more we should expect from Him.

We should not stop at merely thinking about our poverty. We may think about this until we grow morbid; until we have no capacity for thinking of anything higher. When Jesus corrects the mistake of the Laodiceans, and tells them that they are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; He adds, "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich, and white clothing, that you may be clothed." Jesus is too considerate, too tenderhearted, too noble—to remind us of our deep poverty, unless He were willing to relieve it.

We can believe that Jesus thinks with great happiness of all the fullness and riches in Himself; that "it pleased the Father that in Him would all fullness dwell." And in this thought of His fullness and exceeding wealth, His people have large place. It is all for them! The true secret of pleasure in the possession of wealth, is to have it for the purpose of giving. The pleasure of hoarding is a pleasure of sin. Jesus hoards nothing; what He has, and is communicable to His people, He does communicate; and doing this is joy to Him. A part of the defense of Mary, consisted also in Christ's saying that she would in one sense leave Him unserved; if she left the position she took up at His feet. He was content to forego the lesser, for He knew that the greater was present. And Jesus is the same now as He was in Mary's time; He will be to us even as He was to her. There are now invisible and quiet receptions and teachings at Jesus' feet—even as there were at Bethany, when Mary sat at those blessed feet!

01.07. Chapter 7 The Demoniac

Chapter 7 THE DEMONIAK How the demoniac came to be at the feet of Jesus

"When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid!" Luke 8:33-35

It is a skillful hand which can produce a perfect picture with masses of clouds above, and with darkness in the foreground as well as in the background; the whole of the picture's light being concentrated on two figures with dazzling brilliancy. This Luke has accomplished here; and he could not have done it had not the material been supplied to him direct from heaven.

Everything here is black—the demons, the swine, the conduct of the Gadarene people—but, lit up with an intense light, is to be seen Jesus, and the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at His feet. This man is to be our study now—

(1) how the man came to be at those feet;

(2) the man as he was there;

(3) the man as he was seen there; and (4) the man as he was sent away from there. And in inquiring into how this man, known as "the demon-possessed man," both far and near, came to be found at such a place as "the feet of Jesus," and under such altered circumstances as, "sitting," "clothed," and "in his right mind"—our minds revert to the figures in the picture, with which the chapter opens.

It is by no chance, by no hasty and unskilled manipulation of the brush, that such figures could be produced. There are inherent difficulties which present a resistance to the artist. We might say, there is a preliminary resistance to be overcome, and a preliminary process to be gone through. Both these we find here. Let us, so far as we can, trace the working in of the immediate background, which by its darkness throws out the figures of Jesus and the demoniac sitting at His feet. We shall confine ourselves to this; and, it may be, as we proceed, the reader will find that some of the dark colors which are mixed are those with which he is, from sad experience, only too familiar himself. This man did not come into his sitting posture at Jesus' feet without preliminary resistance, and that resistance presents us with three important characteristics. It was the resistance of darkness, of effort, and of debased intelligence. We have these three ingredients well defined. The man was in a state of utter darkness as regards Jesus; not as regards who He was, for Mark tells us that, "when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshiped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with you, Jesus, Son of the most high God!" But as regards His character and mission; his only idea of Jesus was that of His being a tormentor. That the man had an awfully debased idea of Jesus—we shall see presently; but, co-existent with that,

was his profound darkness. When it is put in so many plain words, we are startled at the idea of a man calling Jesus a "tormentor." From our youth up, we have always heard of His sweetness and tenderness, and of His invitations to the weary and the heavy-laden to come to Him, and He will give them rest. And there is scarcely anyone professing to be a Christian, who would not shrink horror-stricken from the blasphemy of calling Him in plain terms so fearful a name; but underneath the thin gilding of nominal Christianity, we soon come to the debased metal of the natural heart; the only real idea of many a one is—that He is his tormentor. This is one of the hard speeches which the hearts of ungodly sinners have spoken against Him; and concerning which He will execute judgment, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints.

It may seem hard to some that, they should be held accountable for speech which they have never uttered with their lips. They say, 'Human laws do not take note of any but overt acts.' But the law which has to do with your souls, takes note of the libels of the heart; it hears a voice out of the depth of the darkness of our inner feelings and desires say of Jesus, as the crucifying crowd said, "Away with Him," or, as the demoniac howled out, "Do not torment me!" The pressing home of the truth, the immediate and undeniable presence of Christ, the feeling that a man has to do, not with what he has read or heard of Christ—but with His very self, brings out what he really thinks of Him by nature—that He is a tormentor, "do not torment me!"

It is the work of the prince of darkness; it is the great lie of darkness; there, in darkness and ignorance about who Jesus is—does the evil one like to keep the soul; and such is the utterance he delights to hear it make. Indeed, this heavy dull resistance of darkness, and ignorance, is the first great impediment to Christ's true work upon the soul. No wonder that people do not want to have any close dealing with Him, when they think of torment and discomfort! No wonder that so many young people will have nothing to do with Him, saying, 'If I become what people call a Christian, I shall lose all my pleasures!' And so many older ones say, 'I shall not be able to devote myself so thoroughly to my business, making it all in all to me as it is now. If I answer this claim of a higher love, those who now have my affections cannot have them as thoroughly as they had before. Jesus, we adjure you, do not torment us! We will not do anything openly against you, only do not torment us!' This poor demoniac did not know, that Jesus never took—but to give; never emptied—but to fill. He had no idea of there being anything beside wandering in the tombs; and thought that to lose even that wretched existence, would be, perhaps, to go out into the deep. He was like many now, who think there can be no change from what they have or are, to what is better; but that the loss of these is the loss of all. This was one point of resistance which had to be overcome, before the demoniac could be brought to the feet of Jesus. As might naturally be expected, the passive resistance of opinion—issued in the active one of effort. What strength this man had, and indeed it was terrible, he put into his rejection of Jesus—he "cried with a loud voice."

It may seem to us that, there is nothing astonishing in this, seeing the man was a demoniac—that the loud cry is what was to be expected from him. And just because it was what was to be expected, is it likely to escape our notice in the teaching which it has for ourselves. He was under demon rule; and it is the law of demon nature that it should put forth all its strength against Christ. In this case, the cry was outward and audible; but such cries are now often to be heard in the spiritual world, though, as far as mere human hearing is concerned, all is silent; or there may be even a passive endurance of the presence of Christ. The ears of Him who can hear the heart's real voice are smitten with the cry, "Have you come to torment me?" "What have I to do with you?"

Though men know not what they are saying, they are in truth crying out, 'Leave me as I am! I prefer to be torn and to cut myself with stones, to range the mountains in nakedness, and to dwell among the tombs—to having anything to say to You.'

There is One who judges not after the seeing of the eye, nor after the hearing of the ear; and He hears voices which appear to join in family worship, and to mingle with the psalmody of His Church, crying out from the heart's real depths, "What have I to do with you—Son of the living God?—have you come to torment me?"

There is something very dreadful in the energies of a man's nature being gathered up in resisting Christ—in the loud voice so ready to rise against Jesus; especially when compared with the feebleness of the voices which rise for good. And in the day of great account, when the history of the soul's transactions with Jesus shall be disclosed, how many will there be who will then for the first time discover, to their horror—the amount of energy they had put into their rejection of Jesus—how loudly they repudiated—how loudly they cried out against Him! That loud voice of the demoniac, however startling to others, was not so to himself—he was accustomed to "crying;" and so it may be with man now; he may cry long and loud, and yet unabashed, against Jesus. Satisfied with his own state, a man may all the while be crying out against the Son of God, and pouring the blasphemies of the heart into listening ears in the other world. The resistance offered by the demoniac to Christ was not, however, one of simple violence. The evil spirits, when they entered into the swine, acting in a manner suitable to the nature of the creatures in which they were lodged, impelled them violently down a steep place into the deep; but when in the man, they wrought through a debased mind.

He recognized the existence of distinct and widely divergent paths for himself and Jesus; and embodied the thought energetically in the loudness of his cry. Of all the cries with which that man made the solitude of the graves ring again—there was not one, into which he more terribly put his whole being than this. And although it is not accompanied with loud cries, or is shouted out to the world; yes, even though on the other hand, the spiritual demoniac is a cunning man, rather than a violent man, and tries to hide his principle of action from the world, still he who stands out in opposition to Christ, does so upon a like foundation with the demoniac here. The foundation of all rejection of Jesus—is the deep inward feeling that we have nothing in common with Him; and, moreover, that we wish to have nothing in common with Him. A man sees that Christ's ways are not as his ways; and that for him and Christ to come together—is like the meeting of fire and water.

There are numbers of men who would be content to have Christ—if they could keep their sin and old selves also; but they know enough to feel they cannot; and so they bid Him to leave. This man took up a demoniacal standpoint, from which he viewed himself; putting himself as a demon-possessed, out of the common family of manhood, and denying that he had anything to do with Jesus the Son of the Most High God.

Now from what standpoint did Jesus view this man? He took him, we conceive, in the twofold power of His being the Son of God and Son of man. This demoniac, when he cried, "What have I to do with you?" put a question to which he thought there could be but the one answer—namely, "nothing," but to which Jesus knew there was another; and in that other lay the man's deliverance and life. The one thus possessed of devils, and directly challenging Christ with this question, was a man, and Jesus was 'Son of man,' as well as Son of God. As horrible as was the condition of the

devil-possessed, there was a point of common humanity between him and Christ. The human nature thus degraded, was the same as that which sinlessly belonged to Jesus himself. And Jesus recognized the humanity of the man. He said, (Mark 5:8,) "Come out of the man." The man's identification of himself with the devils, "My name is Legion—for we are many"—that, coupling together and intermingling of the "I" and "we," is not recognized by Jesus; He severs the man from the spirits, and sets him free as a man again. "You unclean spirit, come out of him!"

It is well—yes, it is essential to our spiritual life, even to our salvation, to be strong on the subject of the Godhead of Jesus; it is equally necessary that we should be strong on that of His manhood. Nothing is to be gained by our impairing in the slightest degree the perfect humanity, and the completeness of the humanity—of Jesus. On the other hand, there is great loss; for if Jesus is not fully man—human sinfulness apart, the key to infinite treasure is lost. Where is our Sympathizer? Where is our experienced Friend? Where is our very sin-atonement Sacrifice? To detract from the fullness of Christ's manhood, is as much to disturb the harmony and full proportion of His being, and to wrong and misunderstand Him, as to detract from His Godhead. Touch His perfect Godhead, or His perfect manhood—and you have no longer the Christ of the Bible; nor, we may add, the Christ of your own need. And descending from Jesus to ourselves, we may repeat a portion of this observation. There is nothing to be gained by impairing the dignity of manhood; even as, on the other hand, nothing is to be had by exaggerating it. There are opposite schools of thought by which each of these errors are taken up. He who would know what man really is, must hold part of what is held by each.

One practical point, however, is suggested to us here by Christ's recognition of the man, and His refusal to acknowledge the obliteration of humanity by the indwelling of the devils. It is this—As man, with all the great possibilities of manhood, with all its privileges, with all His own community with it, His own interest in it—you are before the Lord. He is predisposed to look favorably upon you. Your very humanity goes for much with Him; it is important in His eyes. Jesus does not acknowledge the right of evil beings or propensities to have possession of you. How completely then have all who would struggle against evil—the sympathies of Jesus on their side! How is He willing that the nature which He Himself bears in all sinlessness should be rescued from evil in every way! How have we with us the Son of God, and Son of man! And then, forasmuch as our eyes must be kept closely upon Jesus, mark how this man was saved by what was in that Holy One, and not by anything in himself. He was so clouded as to his state, so overridden with evil, that all which came forth from him was the cry of repudiation of any oneness with the Lord. But the clear eye of Jesus saw all; and out of the love and pity of His own heart, He acted, and called back the man to true manhood, yes, and to His own feet. It was Jesus' view of the man's necessity, and not his own, that did it all. And thus there came an end to the terrible "often" of which we read—the binding with fetters and chains, the plucking asunder and breaking in pieces of those bonds, the futile efforts of man to tame him. All the man's sufferings, his double woe, from the tyranny of the devils, from the discipline of his fellow-men, were ended. From all suffering there is a voice of comfort, if we are skilled to catch its tones; and they are to be found here.

We know perhaps the meaning of the word "often," sadly know it, in our own history, and in that of dear ones, whom over and over again we have attempted to control—but all in vain. This "often" is found more or less in the history of every soul; how terribly in that of some! Perhaps, how terribly in our own! But Jesus can deal with our "oftens" as well as with our "seldoms," the latter frequently as

bad as the former.

We mention them as embracing all our need, our omissions and commissions, our violence and our apathy, our all of evil, whatever it may be; therefore, let us take courage.

Man has failed. We have failed with others. We have failed with ourselves. The remembrance of the "often" is overwhelming us. We have expended all known means—fettters and chains—for binding up evil. Let us remember this demoniac's "often," the "often" of his friends, and where we found him at last—at the feet of Jesus.

01.08. Chapter 8 The Demoniac Sitting at the Feet of Jesus

Chapter 8 The Demoniac Sitting at the Feet of Jesus

Even the greatest events often make impressions on us, wholly inadequate to their real importance. We do not care to inquire into how they came about—how wonderful they really are—what great results hang upon them. Anathema maranatha. We are struck by some few of the leading features—but we are not concerned to inquire into the minutiae. The crowds who line the streets, and fill the balconies, and cluster on the house-tops, when a victorious army is returning to the capital in triumph, are, perhaps, intoxicated with the pageant; it passes amid a whirl of excitement and storm of applause—but how few think of all that it involves—the patient drills, the working together of so many brains, the union of so many hearts and hands and minds, the forethought, the self-denial, and the skill. And still fewer think of all that hangs upon this success—the political changes, the effects upon national character, the misery or welfare of their fellow-men, as the case may be. And thus exactly is it with regard to the story of the demoniac, who is here presented to us, as sitting at the feet of Jesus. There he is, a sufficiently astonishing object to attract our attention, and excite our wonder; but how few think of all which, as we have seen, happened, before he was brought there; and of all that, for himself and others, hung upon his wondrous change!

We have seen something of what was involved in the demoniac's coming to be at the feet of Jesus at all; now let us contemplate him as he is sitting there. The demoniac presents himself to us under three different aspects, he is:

(1) a changed man, (2) a resting man, (3) a satisfied man.

He is, as it were, a ray of light emanating from Jesus. And just as a ray, the moment you pass it through a prism, breaks up into a diversity of beautiful colors, so the work of Christ, when examined, divides itself into component parts, each one distinct—but each harmonizing with the other. The demoniac might easily, as sitting at Christ's feet, be presented to us in as many aspects as there are colors in the prismatic ray; even then the subject of his change would not have been treated exhaustively—but these three will suffice for the purpose immediately in hand. The demoniac was a CHANGED man indeed. His cure was perfected at once; and so he is presented to our notice, as being a complete and startling contrast to what he had been before. He had been violent—he is now calm; he had been naked—he is now clothed; a few moments before he would have nothing to do with Christ—now he is sitting at His feet. He loved to dwell among the tombs—now he sits at the feet of the One whose voice the dead in their graves shall hear, and live—the spoiler of the sepulcher, the Resurrection and the Life.

We may crouch at the feet of Jesus in abject terror—or sit there in satisfying rest. The man had done the first—and now he does the last. As in many a case, there was a falling—before there came a sitting. It was with him, as it was afterwards with Paul. The reader will observe that we are speaking of the contrast of a completed cure. And we are anxious to state this, because so many

say that nothing is done—unless all is done. We have shown how little sympathy we have with this idea, by tracing the preliminary process through which this man went, and the all importance of his debased humanity being brought into contact with the man Christ Jesus, the Son of the Most High God.

Every approach to Christ is precious, every dealing direct with Him is hopeful. We know not what may come out of it; there may, no doubt, be rejection of Him, as by the Gadarenes—but there may be healing from Him, as there was for the dweller among the tombs. The demoniac is a changed man in his whole being—externally and internally; he is clothed as regards the body without; he is in his right mind as regards his intellect within.

These two great points of change have their distinct teachings. As soon as the devils were cast out, the rescued demoniac became the recipient of charitable kindness from those around. From some of those who were present, he doubtless received what was sufficient to clothe his nakedness.

Jesus had wrought, as was His custom, up to the immediate necessity of the case; and just as He commanded that food should be given to the daughter of Jairus when He had raised her from the dead—but did not create any for the purpose; so here He allowed the demoniac to be clothed by the kindness of those who were around. By this act they took him back into the fellowship of rational manhood; and it may be that, in leaving this part of the poor man's need to them, Jesus meant that there should be some teaching for ourselves. The torn garments of the Gadarene cast from him in his madness—the clothing which, when he would use it, he received from the hands of kindly charity, have their teaching, as well as has that coat without seam, woven throughout from neck to foot, which God, for His own purposes, deemed worthy of being enshrined. The view in which the rescued demoniac presents himself to us here is that of a recipient of charitable kindness.

Often, after the great work of Christ upon the soul—he who has experienced it needs much charitable help. It may be that this has its place in the deep providence of God. For while none but Jesus can do the great work, He wills that we, in our measure and place, should be fellow-workers together with Him. When He raises Lazarus from the dead, He says, "Loose him, and let him go!" When He multiplies the bread, He delivers it to His disciples, and through them to the hungry crowd. When He will pay the tribute money, He sends Peter to cast a hook. When He will give them a multitude of fishes, they must cast at the right side of the ship. In the work of our salvation—the great sacrifice upon the cross—Jesus stands alone; but in other things He is continually drawing His people into fellowship of work with Himself. It may be that, these are some of the bonds which are destined forever to bind together that great family of which Jesus Himself is Head.

There is meaning in what the Lord leaves undone—as well as in what He does.

Often then, as we have said, immediately after Christ's great work, there is need of charitable help. The man upon whom He has wrought is alive to what he so recently was—and he needs kindness, sympathy, the reception into fellowship, the covering over of that recent shame, at which, indeed, he is so much abashed himself.

It is we, such of us as are with Christ, who are to do this for him. We must not want to get him to sit at our feet. Alas! how many in a spirit of partisanship, or patronizing, would do this. His place is at the feet of Jesus! But we are to accept and endorse that restoration of him to true manhood which Jesus has wrought. The casting out of the old evil spirit leaves a man with many necessities; perhaps if we knew how many—we would try to supply him so far as we are able. This is one of the teachings suggested to us here. And as this comes to those who are with Christ, His followers and friends, when He does His great work, so the next comes to the person on whom such a work is wrought. As soon as ever Jesus casts out the evil spirit—a new set of claims arise. The claims which the demons made—were those of violence, and shame, and outragings of humanity in every form; the claims of the man's restored being—were those of decency and order.

We are now only speaking of the demoniac in his external aspect. There is an outward decency, as well as an inward change, belonging to the spiritual life. Would that it were always more enforced in preaching, more carried out in practice. This history of the demoniac speaks to two opposite sets of preachers—those who on the one hand urge the all-importance of an inward change—but tarrying there, take no heed to inculcate the necessity of a decidedly holy life. On the other hand, there are those who inculcate all preciseness of outward living—but leave untouched the conversion of the heart.

Exorcized by Christ, and sitting clothed at His feet, we have, in a figure, the whole truth—both without and within; and without because within, the blessed change is wrought. The man did not complain of any irksomeness or hard restraint in wearing the unaccustomed clothing: so far from it, he would not have been contented without it; his condition of nakedness would have been uncomfortable, and out of harmony with his new life; for very shame's sake he would probably have rushed away to the tombs again, no longer, indeed, to delight himself in them—but there to be hidden. But such an end would have ill-befitted this great work of Christ. The man's destiny was to be something very different from that; he was to sit clothed for awhile at Jesus' feet, and then to go forth clothed into the haunts of men—a robed preacher among his own kin of the wonderworking power of Christ.

Now what has been our experience? What do we feel within ourselves? What aspect do we present to the world? Is it possible that after Christ's great transformation of us, we can be content to feel and act as we used to do? Surely not! New cravings, new desires, new necessities, have sprung up. As the apostle's converts were his epistle, known and read of all men—so we must be the epistle of Christ's work, read and known of all. The world ought to be able to read Christians even externally. When the Gadarenes came to see what was done—and see him who was possessed with the legion of devils, and had the legion, sitting and clothed, and in his right mind—the evidences of their senses showed that he was a changed man. And that very evidence we should distinctly seek to give to the world. We must give them something to see. Wherever we were known as bad, there let us seek to be known as changed. We may have many failures—but our very effort amid failures will be an undeniable testimony. The external and the internal change were necessarily conjoined. They were so in the case of the prodigal—when he came to himself, (and in truth he had been beside himself,) before he returned, just as he was, with his shoeless feet and tattered rags, and his father brought forth the best robe, and put shoes on the way-worn feet. The demoniac was now in his right mind—this clothing was with his full consent; he adopted it. The Gadarenes recognized him as in his right mind, and in truth he was, and that much more

than they knew—much more, indeed, if we push the matter to its furthest, than they were themselves.

Outward change was all they could understand—but that they saw. He himself had that which was peculiarly his own; he had received from Jesus something so individual and personal that, like the name in the white stone, none could know it save he who had received it; but there, in his own person, he furnished his countrymen with such evidence of change, as they could receive.

We are bound to do the same. No one on earth ever knew, or could know the secret which was between that man's soul and Christ; but there was that in him which they who ran might read.

Christ wills that we should have secrets between us and Him. What love could there be without secrets? Secrets to be told, and to be heard—involving the delightful consciousness, that no one knows them but ourselves.

There will probably be such secrets even throughout eternity—secrets, if for no other reason—yet because they could not be put into words; they belong to that particular heart; and I can imagine its having a holy jealousy in parting with them; they are witnesses of the individuality of Christ's love with the individuality of our love—perhaps a witness of the personal bond by which we are held to Him. The demoniac a RESTING man! There he sat at the feet of Jesus, with, in all likelihood, no elaborate feelings—but just simply with consciousness of blessing and enjoyment of rest—a something, the like of which he had never felt before. No doubt if we set ourselves to seek for them, we should find the germs of all sorts of blessed feelings; but the one thing which probably filled his mind was the thankful consciousness of blessing. For well he knew, that it was but a very little while ago since he had been not only unblest himself—but one who hurt everyone on whom he could lay his hands.

Now he had a quiet consciousness that he had entered upon a new phase of existence; and there was a great honoring of Jesus in that calm sitting at His feet.

There are many excellent people who despise, or at any rate do not make very much of a quiet meditation—a calm enjoyment of Christ, like this.

They would drive the man about vehemently again. It is true they would do it with the best motives—but they do not know the value of a quiet resting-time at the feet of Jesus—that every moment there, is, in truth—a laying up of fresh energy, which will develop itself with power by-and-by. But the demoniac could appreciate this rest; he had but to compare it with previous unrest; and bare rest, even with nothing else, was sweet. It had the charm of a new state, of new feelings; the tempest was over—and this was calm.

It was, indeed, something very new. The devil-possessed man had known of but one acceptable rest, and he had cried aloud for it—it was to be let alone by Christ; but Jesus has another rest for him—it is at His feet. He knew of that, for him, which he could not know or guess of for himself—and He led him to it. This is how the Lord acts. He hears us bid Him away in our madness—but triumphing over us, makes us love what we but a little time before both hated and dreaded—great closeness to Himself, a place at His very feet.

We do not suppose that there was anything speculative going on in that poor man's mind, that he had much thought at all; the sense of deliverance, of blessing, of what had happened to him,

perhaps some vague sense of a relationship between himself and Christ, was all he had—but what an "all" was that!

We often misjudge, and make great mistakes about people who are not out in any open ministry for Christ. We think they are bringing Him no glory and honor. In many cases it may be so—but assuredly not in all. The demoniac, as he sat there, was a glorious spectacle to men and angels; he was a witness to Christ's power; his satisfaction in being at those feet at rest, was a great testimony to Christ's might. For here was displayed the triumph of the immaterial over the material. Material bonds never could have kept the man there—but immaterial did; human restraints, such as cords and chains, could do no more—but Jesus had done all.

Jesus, no doubt, could have restrained the brute force of the man, and caused him henceforth only to gnash his teeth in impotent fury among the tombs; but He went higher, He acted on the outward through the inward; He touched the fountain-head of the evil—and thus brought the afflicted one to tarry willingly at His feet. In truth, there are many who will be held in by neither bit nor bridle, who will be bound neither with cords nor chains; but there is something stronger than all outward restraint. They know what they can resist—but they do not know what they cannot resist. If Jesus comes indeed, they will be overcome. There may be tearing and rending—but the dealing with the inward will conquer.

Always believe that there is an 'inward' on which to deal—a something in man to which Christ, and he who goes in the name of Christ, can speak.

Jesus would not recognize this man as wholly a devil; and no matter how much a man will, perhaps in reality, or perhaps in bravado, make himself out devilish, he has, nevertheless, that which can be appealed to in the name of Christ. And this power of Christ to deal with what is altogether beyond our reach, must be our great hope—our hope as regards ourselves and others. It must be the mainstay of ministers in their dealings with souls; of teachers with their pupils; of parents with their children. It is from the heart there proceed all the evils which defile and disgrace a man; and it is Christ's spiritual influence alone—which can get at the heart. Christ works from that which is within, to that which is without.

We have said that the demoniac had probably no elaborate or well-defined feelings while thus, during this brief period, at the feet of Jesus; just the consciousness and enjoyment of deliverance— calm, peace, quiet—these were the main ingredients of his happiness.

Let us not hurry new-born souls, by trying to force a multitude of well-defined, and, perhaps, advanced truths into their minds. In trying to give them more than they can take in, you may deprive them of what they have. Rest affords elements of growth. And we may remark that, in the spiritual life, it is possible to commit an error in attempting to make every feeling or sensation take a particular and definite shape.

Some feelings are not destined to shape themselves for a season—some are, perhaps, never intended to do so. There is beauty and power, too, in the undefined things of God. Let us respect them; let us not be coarse in meddling with them. No doubt, there are men who would like never to have anything but a dreamy and undefined religion. But it is not because of that error that we should ignore this truth.

It is very possible that this man had some vague sense of relationship between Christ and himself; there was, at least, that of the healer and the healed; it possibly helped to bind him there to the feet, and we may be sure it energized him when he went to testify to those of his house.

Relationship to Christ!—let us establish that: and who can tell what it will do?

We must add a line upon the aspect of the once demoniac, as a SATISFIED man.

There are two interesting points in which he might be thus contemplated—as satisfied, though he had to part with an entire past; and though there lay before him an unknown future. Looked at in a mere natural point of view, these were calculated to be elements of disquiet; but we must view them from the standpoint of the work of Christ.

He who is truly acted on by Christ—is willing to have the past a past indeed. He judges, he condemns it. He acknowledges that it was his—alas! too surely his sin. But now, at the feet of Jesus, he has to do with it no more. No fruit has he now in those things whereof he is ashamed; the time past suffices in which to have wrought such wickedness. He is not judged only of others, he has judged himself. The separation he wills to be complete; he wishes it to be entirely past. His only remembrance of it he desires to be with horror. He takes up the confession which says, "The remembrance of them is grievous."

Many people cannot understand the willingness of Christ-acted-on men, to part with a whole past—they urge as an objection to receiving Christ that they will have to give up so much; they say, how can I give up this or that? But such as have felt the power of Christ, are satisfied—their will goes with His will.

There lay an unknown future before that man sitting so restingly and quiet at Jesus' feet; but it troubled him not; he sat and was at peace.

It may be that in after days he had to bear persecution, like the blind man whom the Jews reviled; in all probability he did not give that testimony which he was commissioned by Jesus to give, without some hazard to himself; but the future, all unknown and new as it must be, was no concern to him, as he sat at the feet of Jesus. Nor need it be to us. He who has parted with the past by the power of Christ—shall by that power be preserved in the future. The hand which has cut him off from a past of the evil ones, will bind him to a future of His own.

Therefore, dear reader, do not let the future trouble you with fears. You can meet with no enemy worse than the one over whom Jesus has already given you the victory. He sends you out into the future with great tokens, and pledges of His power. You have received no spirit of bondage—but a spirit of adoption, wherein you cry out, 'Abba, Father!'

We need have no fears of that future into which we go at Jesus' command, and straight from sitting at His feet.

01.09. Chapter 9 The Demented—the Man as Seen at the Feet of Jesus

Chapter 9 The Demented—the Man as Seen at the Feet of Jesus

Before we consider the subject of this man's being sent away from the feet of Jesus, where, as we would think, he might have so fitly been allowed to stay—it will be well worth our while to survey him as seen there by others—by the Gadarenes, his fellow-countrymen—those who had only too good right to know who he was; in whom, from very self-interest's sake, the miracle wrought should have excited other feelings than those which it did. As soon as tidings of what had occurred got abroad, all the people round about from city and country came together to Jesus. At His feet, they see the former demented sitting clothed and in his right mind; they are struck with awe; then they hear again how the wonder had come about, "and concerning the swine," and they beg Him to depart out of their coast.

They came to Jesus, and found the man.

What a sight! Man in the highest form—Jesus; man rescued from the lowest form—a habitation of devils—"the man who had the devils."

Here a great sight was presented to them; and we would have thought that the presentation of that picture—that first sight which struck their eye, ought to have produced an entirely different effect from what it did. The Gadarenes were unconscious even of that which they might have known. The man now sitting quietly before them was the one who had been the terror of the neighborhood. They had doubtless known plenty of instances of his violence—their wives and children probably trembled at the mention of his name; was it nothing that he should be made harmless, and that men could henceforth "pass by that way" which he had frequented and made unsafe? The blessing even in this light was great—there they might read it, even in a single glance at Jesus' feet; but it does not seem to have come home—it was overborne by the destruction of their swine.

It is amazing how slow men are to perceive, and to acknowledge, even the visible advantages which come from the working of Christ. They see men, who were the pest of the neighborhood, becoming its blessing; those who set the worst example—now setting the best; those who used by their idleness to be a burden to others—now industrious for themselves, and so on; and they will not see how good among them must be the presence of the One by whom such wonders are wrought. The world takes but little note of the great things it owes to Christ's working—in its anxiety to get rid of Christ Himself. That they should be unconscious of the fullness of the wonderful miracle, we need not be surprised. They could not, indeed, know how complete was the antagonism between Jesus and the devils; but the bare fact of His having power over them might have awakened some other thoughts than those which then filled their hearts. But they did not; and we here see that what we think would be invincible evidence, may often prove inoperative altogether.

We have been amazed that men could not be worked upon, as regards their own souls, when they saw and recognized the change wrought upon some neighbor, or in some member of their family; but that fear of loss, of having to give up, as they think, what they now value, counteracts it all. This is the power of self-interest—to hinder sight, or enquiry. The Gadarenes found no swine—and this hindered their understanding or valuing what they did find. The wonder of the cured demoniac—that of the presence of One by whom such folk could be cured—could not compete with the value of the swine! That the devils had gone out of the man was more than counterbalanced by their having gone into the swine. They found "a man," where they had known only a 'habitation of devils'—but they did not enter into that reasoning; they had not the spiritual wit to see and accept this great fact, and to refuse to put "a man" in competition with swine!

It is, indeed, amazing how low self-interest will sink us—how it will make us forgetful of high charities; how it will so fill us with its own seen affairs, that we cannot interpret other seen things which are before our very eyes, in which, in truth, our deepest interests are concerned.

Wherever there is a great door open, there are the many adversaries; there is not a thing of earth—but that has in it the capacity for interfering with the things of heaven! Even when Jesus is most manifestly present—are to be found 'many swine!'

Great personal loss is occasioned by lack of spiritual discernment. So is it here. These Gadarenes, if only they had been equal to the occasion, might have argued blessing for their own afflicted ones, or themselves, from the presence of Jesus. Had He cured such a one as the demoniac—then what might He not do for them and their loved ones! But they did not think of utilizing Jesus; they thought only of the swine! They knew not the time of their visitation.

Jesus, with the demoniac at His feet, was a proclamation to them that a Healer was in the midst of them for them; but they failed to hear it, and the opportunity passed away.

We need not be surprised. It is an awful thing to allow 'swine' to come into competition with Jesus. The swine are always more or less present, and more or less attempting to do this; but when with full set purpose men give them the upper place—it is no marvel if Jesus leaves them. And although it is hoped that the reader of these pages is one who prefers Jesus to all others, (else why has he taken up a book on such a subject as the "Feet of Jesus" at all,) still let him—yes, and let the writer, too, be on their guard against the intrusion of these swine!

We must not depress them into a position of no value, if we are to be taught by the story of the demoniac; for the swine were of value in the eyes of the Gadarenes. The material things which come into competition with Christ, have their power from their value; and we must overcome that power by a high appreciative standard of who the Lord is, and what He does. We must say, 'such is Jesus—that all competition is forbidden.' And from His gracious dealings with others, we must draw arguments for ourselves. Has He received and transformed such and such an one? has He given a blessing to such another? What are these good things which He has scattered here and there—do they belong to the recipients of them alone? Or have they nothing to say to me?

If I have spiritual discernment—they are all for me as well. For these men have not exhausted Jesus. It is true that virtue has gone out of Him, and He has perceived it; but He desires that more virtue still should flow from Him to others.

It is good, then, to see and note what Jesus has done—to understand it—to use it—to see those sights which may now be continually seen in the spiritual world—Jesus, and the demoniac at His feet!

01.10. Chapter 10 The Demoniac—the Man as Sent Away from the Feet of Jesus

Chapter 10 The Demoniac—the Man as Sent Away from the Feet of Jesus

Even in daily life, and in the experiences of our own souls, do we find it true that the Lord's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. An example we find here. Jesus solemnly taking the Gadarenes at their word, moved towards the ship which had brought Him to their shores. That ship had come full freighted with blessing; and now, with the exception of what might be left behind in and through the demoniac, it was about to bear all away again.

There was one, however, from among the Gadarenes, who willed not that Jesus should depart from those coasts, rather that Jesus would have tarried there forever. Need we say that that man was the one so lately known as the demoniac. "As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed kept begging Him to go with Him."

We can imagine the man's distress, perhaps his agony of mind, as he saw Jesus about to embark, and go where he could not follow. As the boat receded from view, he at least would stand upon the shore, with his eye riveted upon it, until it faded from his sight. His eye would strain to secure the last glimpse of the One to whom he owed all; and as His figure became lost amid the others, and the boat itself became indistinct, and disappeared, he would return home disconsolate and alone.

Those who belonged to Jesus were about to embark with Him, and he who gladly would be with Him too, must be separated from Him, to go and live among those who have rejected his deliverer, and, it may be, himself; for it was through his cure—that they lost their swine! To have sat at those feet, and now to see them depart, probably forever from his shores—yes, to see them sent away, may have well grieved him to the very heart!

We need no great powers of imagination to picture to ourselves the feelings of this poor man, as Jesus was about to depart. Love, reverence, gratitude, all the higher and nobler feelings of our nature—were probably putting forth their power in him who had so lately been a habitation of devils. But other motives also may have had their place.

It was but a very little while before, and this man had been torn by the devils. His memory was filled with the pictures of what he had been. He shuddered at the thought; and also, it may be, at the dread lest those evil ones should find him again; and so entering into the house now swept and garnished, make his last estate worse than the first.

We cannot wonder if this poor man were full of fears. He thought, perhaps, of the wondrous look of Jesus' eye, and of the sound of His voice, as He commanded the evil spirits to leave him, and that he would not be safe away from that eye and voice.

If such thoughts filled his mind, they were natural, though not of necessity true. And it may be observed further, that the self-distrust which such a class of thought exhibits, is far more safe than

that overweening confidence which, among many now-a-days is, on their first reception of the truth, so common.

If the poor man before us now had such a thought as we have been speaking of, it was in its measure a true one—for no one is safe out of the reach of the eye, and ear, and voice of Jesus. Only he knew no more than of the natural eye, and voice, and ear; and if so, no wonder if he was afraid to be left behind, far away from reach of them.

It is our happiness to know that we can ever keep within reach of the eye, and ear, and voice of Jesus; and it is our safety to live in the power of this truth. It is well for us to keep steadily in sight—the One by whom we have been delivered; to have all our thoughts centered on on Him; to expect that He who has acted against our enemies, will, if need be, do the like again.

Christians today have this advantage over all who enjoyed His bodily presence on earth for a season—they can ever be with Him, and He with them. The man had a purpose for himself—he besought Jesus that he might be with Him; but Jesus had other purposes, and His and the man's were not the same. No doubt he who has been acted upon strongly by Christ, becomes a man of purpose. New thoughts, and desires, and intentions fill his mind; he will do this and that, he will go here and there for Christ—but the Lord often has different purposes for him. And this is a lesson which we all need to learn—but more especially those who are just brought to Christ. The thought does not come to us naturally, we have to be taught it by God.

It is not of necessity our sin, that we make purposes for ourselves; it is rather ignorance; we have come into a new sphere, where things are managed differently from what they were in the old one; and we know no better than to have our own 'yes, yes,' and our own 'nay, nay,' provided it is for God. The witness of sincerity is very precious—but we must not content ourselves therewith, we must seek to know the mind of God, rather than our own. We must put ourselves at His disposal—and not think of forming purposes for ourselves. For with all our sincerity—we may go astray. We may take the wrong turning altogether, or enter on a path, which will not be the one in which He shall be most glorified.

Let us recognize the purposes of God. Let us say, "He has His purposes for me—let me seek to know them."

It may be that we shall have to learn them through our mistakes—but how much better to do so, through our obedience and self-surrender. God will bring His people to a knowledge of what He wills for them, in some way; but the way may depend as to its bitterness or sweetness, much upon ourselves.

Jesus had commanded this man to leave His feet! Surely if ever man could be excused for thinking that Jesus made a mistake, this man might. If he went with Him, walking reverentially, with His apostles beside Him, or, it may be, even behind Him; if he took up his recognized position at the feet of the One who had exorcized him—surely he would be a perpetual trophy of His might, an ever present witness of His mercy and power! Would not human reason have said, 'It will be well for this man to be ever with Jesus, that men may look at him, and hear from himself and others what he had been, and so believe that Jesus came to overthrow the dominion of the devil.' Would it not be soothing and strengthening to Christ Himself amid the ingratitude of those He benefitted, and the desertion of many who at hard sayings would drop off, and walk no more with

Him—to have one, at least, who would ever sit at His feet, and look up with gratitude at His face, and drink in the sounds of His voice; and perhaps, for all we know, dare the soldiers of the Roman legion; and sit, with bowed head and weeping eyes, at the foot even of the very cross, preferring the feet of Jesus even there, at life's risk—to safety anywhere else!

We would have thought so—but such was not the mind of Christ. When He ascended up on high—He did not back any trophies of triumph from earth. Those who accompanied Him were destined to be a trial to Him, and not a comfort, in the day of His affliction, for they all forsook Him and fled. But we ask ourselves the question as to whether any lack of tenderness can be discerned in Jesus, or any lack of appreciation, in thus sending this man away from continual personal abiding with Him.

What Jesus did here, He did, as ever—wisely and in love. He destined that man to a higher mission than always sitting at His feet.

It may be, that He who saw farther than any human eye, knew that the man's desire was not the best thing for that man's full blessing. At any rate it leads us to the thought that places of the greatest spiritual privilege, communion with particular godly people, all of which we may deem to be essential to our spiritual happiness, or life, really are not so. In our spiritual life, what we may think is best for us—may be too much to us, and too much for us. Loving the unseen Jesus—is a greater blessing, than looking at the very body of Christ, and loving as we look.

We continually find ourselves clinging to the physical in every possible form. Particular books, preachers, churches, companions— may become hindrances and not helps, because they themselves take the place of the spirit which belongs to them, wherein the true preciousness consists.

We often think it very hard that we are sent away from places of spiritual privilege; but God, who knows our earthly tendencies, orders it all in love.

It was when Jesus was on the very point of ascending, that He said, "Lo, I am with you always—even unto the end of the world." The materialistic may take a degraded form, as in the power of the swine to hinder the Gadarenes from receiving Christ. It may take a higher and more refined form, as in binding this man, as the only place of safety or of comfort—to the physical human body of the Lord. As Jesus now sustains His church by His Spirit, and enables it ever by faith to see Him, and repose and rejoice in Him—though His bodily presence is removed. So, perhaps, He meant to sustain this Gadarene, by allowing him to be always with Him, even though His earthly form had taken flight, and was gone.

If only we have faith and spiritual understanding, we shall see that though outward presences depart—that Jesus Himself is not to us, at least, really gone.

He then, who would be ever at the feet of Jesus, or companying with Him, is sent away. "But Jesus would not let him; instead, He told him—Go back home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how He has had mercy on you." At first sight, when we hear Jesus not permitting this grateful man to follow Him, and show his love and admiration by so doing—we may think that the Lord did not appreciate the offer; or that it was harsh for Him not to grant the request. But we find the denial accompanied with a command, which shows us that

Jesus did not sever Himself from the man's offer of service—but accepted it, only in a different sphere from that which he himself had proposed. He would have been a personal disciple of Jesus—but Jesus made him a missionary to the Gadarenes. The former demoniac received a commission from the Lord; he was left on His behalf a witness for Him in the land where He had been rejected; the only human means through which anything could now be done for the people in those parts. All that could be known of His mercy and love—Jesus entrusted to that man. In truth, the man who had the devils now received a high commission from the Lord—one which would require as much spiritual strength from above to fulfill—as it needed strength from beneath to be what he had been before.

He was appointed to solitary testimony amid an exasperated people, and those, his own countrymen. He had aimed high in wishing to be always with Jesus—and he is placed high by Jesus.

Though the Lord was going away—the connection between the Gadarene and Himself was not to be severed. The former demoniac was to be appointed to a place of singular honor and responsibility—to that of solitary testimony. He, and he alone, was to be Christ's witness among his countrymen!

Some might say—'Is this all?' But what a 'this' is it! What a trust is it, and what a man to have it reposed in! The place of solitary witness is one from which flesh and blood might well shrink—but it is one of great honor in the sight of God. Jesus does not reject the service of the Gadarene; He only orders it in a different channel from that which he proposed. The former demoniac was ready to give up home to follow Christ; and herein, perhaps, Jesus found a special suitability for His ministry at home.

It is often the one who is prepared to sacrifice home itself for Jesus—who is privileged to do most there at home! It many a time needs a godly person to do anything among our own friends and family—it is sometimes easier to go to the heathen than to friends. They, perhaps, can taunt us with what they have known us to be—they can say, "you were altogether born in sins, and do you teach us?" We may rest assured that there is ample room for the exercise of the most devoted Christian—in their home town! That demoniac might have suffered as much persecution from his countrymen, as the apostles who left with Jesus ever did in their more extended field of testimony and labor. The Lord appears to have recognized here, in this renewed man, a true relationship to his own friends and people. The demoniacal possession had disturbed it; but now that was removed; and being lifted up into a position altogether superior to anything he could ever have had—simply as a Gadarene, he must, in this new sphere, recognize the old relationships, and witness to his friends and relatives of Christ.

There is a peculiar power in the witness of a changed man in his own home, where he, and all about him, is well known. There are diversities of testimony:

There is the testimony of the man who, to all outward appearance, has lived blamelessly.

There is the testimony of the man who has been turned from the evil and error of his way.

There is the testimony of a 'John'—who leaned on the bosom of Jesus, and of a Paul, who persecuted Him.

Whatever power there was in the changed circumstances of this man, Jesus will have him exercise among his friends. The Lord sends him back to the place from which he had specially fled. There, whence he had been driven forth by the influence of the demons—he returns to by the influence of Christ. The man was to be restored to the highest instincts of humanity, not merely to accompanying with Jesus—but to doing good in the name of Jesus.

Perhaps it was needful that this man, who had fled from home and friends, must be returned to both, as a testimony to the completeness of the undoing of the devils' work by Jesus.

Jesus did not take the Gadarene away, because there were still the mountains, and caves, and tombs, and the stones with which he cut his flesh, all remaining where they used to be during the time of his possession by the devils; they remained as they were—but the former demoniac was changed as regards them. He had a mission to his friends—one which would occupy all his powers and energies, in which he could spend all his strength.

We are reminded of how it often is with ourselves. We are obliged to live amid the scenes of old trials and temptations, ever recalling to our memory what we have been. Sometimes we have to live among them, and hear them inviting us to go along with them in sinfulness, as we were before. But their attraction, and power, and spell are broken. They no longer fit the heart on which Jesus has wrought! That to which they could appeal has gone! They are, and ever must be, the same—but we are wholly changed! And now let the reader gather for himself some teaching from what has been brought before him. To each one upon whom Christ has wrought—there is a sphere of ministry. It may not be—it probably is not, the one which self would choose—but to Him let us leave the ordering of His own interests; and how we are best to give testimony to His glory.

Let no man despise or neglect his sphere of ministry, because it is that of home. Some of the highest victories of the cross have been won in the home; some of the greatest testimony given to Christ has been there. And should the reader of these lines be appointed to a place of solitary testimony among his earthly friends, when he would gladly be always with the people of the Lord—let him remember the honor and responsibility of his position. The Gadarene demoniac was left in that land where Jesus was not received, as in a measure the representative of Jesus Himself. He—rescued, changed, a friend where he had been a foe—was the counteractive to the hard thoughts concerning Jesus—which kept possession of his countrymen's minds because of the loss of their swine.

Strange it may seem that Judas the traitor should be allowed ever to company with the Lord; and that this demoniac, who longed to be with Him, and would, to all appearance, have been a faithful and energetic disciple, is not allowed, as he so earnestly wished, to be with Him. But it teaches us an important lesson. It shows us how little we can argue from external privileges and positions!

Jesus takes sail and goes away—and the Gadarene returns to give testimony among his friends. We hear no more of him; but we may well believe that when the last glimpse of the ship was lost, and he turned his steps home to fulfill the mission with which he had been entrusted, he went in the strength of the Lord, and the remembrance of the power and love by which he had been brought, clothed, and in his right mind—to sit at the 'feet of Jesus.'

01.11. Chapter 11 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Personal Suffering

Chapter 11 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Personal Suffering "They have pierced My hands and My feet!" Psalms 22:16 This Psalm in its almost every letter, is so associated with the particular points of our blessed Lord's suffering upon the cross, that we feel a kind of holy jealousy as to the least change in the well known words. Happily the scholarship which appears to necessitate a slight alteration in the passage, does not really rob us of any old familiar thought, or more important still, of a great and precious fact. The verse is best rendered, "They lion-like, have pierced My hands and My feet!"

We are not concerned at the change which seems to be required, for it detracts nothing from the great fact of the piercing, or of its being foretold. It only embodies in imagery the same great fact, suggesting to our minds the activity of the ferocity with which the wounds were inflicted on the hands and feet of Jesus. Our first subject shall be, The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Personal Suffering. The lions have indeed encircled Him, they have come into contact with Him; they have done so, in the only way which we could expect them to do—they have torn Him! The nail is driven through His feet, even as it is through His hands—the marks of the wild beast's claws are in both hands and feet! The nails are no mere pieces of iron—but the envenomed fangs of ferocious foes!

Here then we have Jesus in pain—in acute personal suffering, from the piercing and wounding of hands and feet.

We must first pause upon the picture of Christ in pain.

Now, when we come to speak of pain at all, we enter upon profound mystery. The problem of the existence of pain is perhaps one of the most difficult which can be submitted to us for solution. WHY should there be pain? Why should Jesus the Son of God—have suffered it?

We are told that in the far off history of this world—that there was pain. "The leaves of the stone book of geology have written on them not merely records of death—but likewise of pain. The fossil fishes which abound in many of our strata, are not found stretched out in the postures of repose, which they would have assumed had they perished calmly; but like men who die in battle, with agony upon them, their bodies are thrown into violent contortions. Historically, pain is ingrained and inseparably interwoven into the whole fabric of our earthly system."

There is little use in our speculating as to the origin of pain; just as little as in our speculating on the origin of evil; or as to whether the one and the other were always inseparably connected. It is not given to us to know these things. Enough for us to call to mind that the very first mention of the Lord is in connection with 'suffering'—that His heel is being bruised. The first promise then, connects Jesus with pain. It leaves the problem of evil, and of pain as in connection with it, unsolved—but it does connect Him with it. He is not represented as the unscathed destroyer of pain—as the One, who from the power of stamping on the head of His foe—can escape unhurt

himself; but as an endurer of pain—a wounded victor, hurt, and that sorely, in the conflict in which He overcomes His foe! In this great problem of pain—Jesus is in the midst of it. He has drunk the cup of suffering to the dregs; He has partaken largely of such suffering as falls to the lot of man in the flesh. He who knows all about pain, what it is—what part it plays in the great arena of God's glory—what are its uses—what its mysteries—has let it come upon Himself, and enter His human nature—and do all that it can do against Him.

Now here, the feet of Jesus, be they torn as with a lion's claws, or pierced as they were by the nails upon the cross—come very helpfully to us. This great problem of pain oppresses me when I think of it, when I feel it. 'Why am I thus?' is a question which many a sufferer has put to himself; and as he cannot answer, dark thoughts cross his mind.

Jesus' disciples ask Him, "Master, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" and Jesus answers, "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents—but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

Lazarus' sickness, with its temporary death, and whatever sufferings which he were endured, were for the glory of God—that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

There were plenty of others lying dead, upon whom, as we might have thought, resurrection power might have been shown—without Lazarus, a living man, being made to suffer and to die. But we are told of this particular case that, it was "for the glory of God." But WHY? Why can God not be glorified without suffering? Ah, there is the problem—and we have no means whatever of even guessing at a solution. But the pain presses—the pain of others—and our own pain. I am practically in the problem; yet so was Christ! I look at Him in His life sufferings, I see Him on the cross, lion-like enemies besetting His hands and feet during life; and lion-like claws fixed in those nailed feet at His death, and I say, "As He was—so are we in this world."

Pain is in itself sinless; Jesus took it on Himself, therefore it cannot separate me from God. He said, "The cup which my Father has given me—shall I not drink it?" Therefore in suffering this pain, whatever it may be, I am in sympathy with the mind of God. My spirit and my body stagger at being in this place, and under these circumstances of trial—but I am where Christ was—and therefore though I suffer, I need not fear; the working out of the problem of my present suffering, is in the hand of God! When the feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross—He left all with His Father. He left it thus, as He said, "Father into your hands I commend My spirit!" Even so, we must, if need be, simply suffer, pierced through—yet saying, "Father into your hands I commend my spirit!"

Vast and overwhelming as is this problem of suffering, let us remember that, although we cannot grasp its great circumference, we can be sure of one or two matters of immense importance to ourselves.

One is, that there may be great dignity in suffering. Another lesson is that we individually may emerge well from suffering; indeed we may be immense gainers out of it! And a third lesson is that Christ is linked to us in suffering; those pierced feet bind Him to all the piercings of humanity; and, if we might so express ourselves with reverence, hold Him in that position. And all this is, because so it was with the suffering and piercing of our Lord. We are in fellowship with Him in the mystery of pain!

Thus much in part do we learn from Christ's feet being pierced with those cruel nails, and suffering physical pain.

Now let us consider the Feet of Jesus—as the Means of Escape.

Here we have first of all, the means of escape willingly allowed to be cut off. Jesus knew full well, when He went forth into the garden, that His enemies would come there, that there was one who knew the place, and who would make a dreadful and fatal use of that knowledge.

It was night, and there was every possibility of escape; for the feet which took Jesus to the place of betrayal, might have taken Him from it. And for anything we know, it may have been a part of the trial of our Lord, to feel that moment after moment was passing, each one lessening the opportunities for escape; that He could go—but that those feet must tarry until Judas came—whose kiss would conduct them to the cross. The feet of Jesus tarried in that garden, not because His flesh and blood would not have desired in themselves to have had them bear Him far away—but because in perfect obedience He was not only to endure suffering when it came—but also to await it while it was coming. And when at last Jesus hung upon the cross, with hands and feet both transfixed; what was He but a spectacle of utter helplessness—the means of defense and of escape both gone?

Surely, there is something very touching and instructional to us—in this yielding of Himself by Christ to God. How few of us have arrived at that state of subjugation of self which makes one willing to forego struggling—to await the oncoming of the painful dispensation—and to accept the helplessness of the dispensation when it comes. We need every help to enable us to do this; let us accept this one—of a contemplation of Jesus' feet nailed and pierced. Those feet were in their very helplessness, at that time, the embodiment of an amazing will. And have we ever thought that—an amazing will for oneness with the mind of God may be found in our simple readiness to see means of escape fail and come to nothing. The feet tarrying in Gethsemane and fixed to the Cross, are the same; and the preliminaries of our sorrows, and our sorrows themselves, should be pervaded by the one spirit also. The position of helplessness is willingly taken up. The time had come for it. Jesus had escaped from His enemies on previous occasions—but now His hour had come, and with it—His will was ready also. Jesus accepts the position of helplessness.

Now, here is a great difference between the sufferings of Jesus—and ours. We too often bear suffering, only because we cannot help it; we, as the saying is, make a 'virtue of necessity,' as our will is not in our trial.

It may be that, we do not think much of the helplessness which it was the will of Jesus to assume for us; how He thirsted and could not get water at the well of Sychar without human help; how He hung upon the cross, nailed hand and foot and could not stir.

Surely Jesus as He thus hung helplessly on the cross—was in this respect, as in many others, a representative man. His people were destined often to be brought into positions of utter helplessness, which they were to accept as fulfilling the will of God. And they could—IF they had only marked the feet nailed to the cross, look back on Jesus hanging there, and in that sight find strength and endurance, and more than resignation, even entire conformity with the Father's mind. When the executioner drove those nails through the feet of Jesus—he wrote many helpful sermons for the church of God—yes, without even knowing it.

Helplessness has trials peculiarly its own. It is a specially humbling condition. It is one into which God has frequently called His people. Jeremiah, Job, Ezekiel, Daniel, Paul—all had trials of it. And few children of God there are—who cannot look back, and see times of helplessness in their past lives.

Perhaps we dread such in the future; we think, 'this my comfort and support will leave me!' Or, 'this means of earning my bread will be taken from me!' Or, 'I shall be put into such circumstances that I shall be totally hedged in!' And we fear that our old energies will be gone and we cannot resist, or stand up as we used to do against such things. We shall be nailed helpless to our cross—and not be able to stir. The cross will enable us to meet all such thoughts—if we know how to use the sight which we see there. His feet, afterwards free with such a liberty as was never known by mortal man, are now nailed! And as with Jesus so with us—'tis but a little while, and God will deliver and crown us.

There was something peculiarly galling to Jesus—in remaining thus nailed helplessly to the cross. For He knew He had the power to escape. "If You be the Son of God—come down from the cross!" had in it an element of bitterness which the human nature of Jesus must have felt. For He could have come down. He had the power to escape—but there was a higher power—of love to God and man which forbade the using it. Only that could not be revealed to those who were around—so there He hung, His acceptance of that fixing by the nails and bearing of the imputation of being an impostor; for if He came down the Jews said that they would believe.

It was a part of our blessed Savior's trial, that He had to allow Himself to be misunderstood; that when the Jews cried, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!" that He should abstain from coming, and let them, in their willful blindness, believe Him to be an ordinary man.

There is sometimes a morbid glorying in being misunderstood. Some people when mistreated, they comfort themselves all the while with the thought of their great virtue in quietly bearing to be so abused. They have a spiteful pleasure in the thought that so-and-so is wrong in his opinion, and would not correct him—but would rather that he continued wrong. And so their principle of endurance is one of self-satisfaction and self-exaltation! This is all the more dangerous, because so inwardly hidden. And it is astonishing how far such a state of feeling will carry a man—how much it will enable him to bear—how much it will take the bitterness out of being misunderstood. But how was it with Jesus? He had already given His proofs; He had told and shown them what He was. This last proof He could not give them, unless at the loss of His people's salvation—and so He had to bear the imputation of being no Savior at all. This being misunderstood was, no doubt, one of the elements of the bitterness of the cross.

It is true, Christ knew that the righting time would come—but the present was the present to Him for all that—it must have been if His humanity were true. For the good of others—to patiently to allow ourselves to be misunderstood, when we could easily clear ourselves, is Christ-like indeed. "Come down from that cross!" they said. And had the pierced feet moved at their call—how could we have been saved? But the pierced feet stay still; and a voice comes to us from the foot of the cross, saying, 'You be still also.' Deep pity there doubtless was in the heart of Jesus for those by whom He was misunderstood—pity was what He felt, and not self-satisfaction, or hate—yet the very pity made it the harder to bear. So perhaps it may be with all misunderstandings from which we suffer—but God may provide a clearing time; and we must let that suffice.

Jesus had to veil His power upon the cross. He held that power, not for self-aggrandizement, or self-vindication, or self-deliverance—but for His Father's will; and He had to hear its existence called into question, and yet give no reply. That which was His own, it was His pleasure to consider as in trust; and the carrying out of the trust involved humiliation. "He saved others—but He cannot save Himself." A very important teaching flows from this, for our daily Christian life. We have much, which, speaking of things in an ordinary way, we say is our own. How far have we attained to the idea of 'our own being in trust'—of our holding it as such? The motionless, pierced feet of Jesus, by the fact of their being motionless, teach us this lesson of power in trust. So, then, it is not because I can do this or that, or have the right to do it—that I can choose to do so. If I have given all to God—I hold all in trust from God, and for Him. It is a blessed experience when we will to hold in trust for God, that, which, speaking in the ordinary sense of words, we might say is our own.

It was an element of Christ's power over Himself, that He knew He had to subordinate all to a purpose—this was one of the human elements of His power. "Don't you know that I must be about my Father's business," was the motto of His life—and also of His death. He had a His Father's will to fulfill; and power and everything else were subordinated to this. To a like source may be traced the success of many a man in life; if his pursuit has been that of honor, or wealth, or scientific investigation, if he has subordinated everything in his life to it—he has generally succeeded. There is one sense in which it is good to be a man of one purpose. Paul said, "This one thing I do." In Christ's human character, the power of purpose was supreme—it wrought to its legitimate end. And He calls upon us—to rise under the His example—and be people of purpose; subordinates to purpose—yes, and successful in purpose. That was what Paul was, when he says, in 1 Corinthians 9:27, that "I beat my body and make it my slave." That is what we have not done, and therefore why we have so often failed.

See in the pierced feet remaining motionless on the cross—the power of purpose.

Recognize also in the One hanging helplessly there, the Man of power in Himself—the One stronger than all who were around. The pierced feet could set themselves free—but would not. And no one saw this. The secret was with Christ Himself alone.

We do not see all the strong men in the spiritual world—in all probability, there are very few of them. God's strong ones are often hidden ones. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, He ordains strength.

Perhaps one of the greatest displays of strength that Jesus ever really made, (though man recognized it not) was when He refused to answer the mocking taunt, and disengage the pierced feet from the cross! And who can tell where displays, far less in their degree—but like in kind, are now being made! And we may make them. We may be the strong men of God in our circumstances of weakness; in our times of piercings, down-trodden by the world, and in its estimation; strong ones by the grace of God, and before God.

There are times when the people of God are put in a position somewhat like Christ's; when they could speak—but their tongue is tied—when they could act—but they must not stir—when they could extricate themselves from some unpleasantness—but they must bear it. No one knows the secret of our reticence, but ourselves; and so, no one can administer any comfort to us in what we

are enduring, or can help us to hold out. But we are not without a Helper, and a Sympathizer too. Jesus knows all about these painful positions; He presents Himself before us with His feet nailed to the cross. He is taunted, He is called upon to come down—but He stirs not, He endures. He accepts the peculiar bitterness belonging to the situation; and He says to us 'In all your afflictions, I was afflicted; and have suffered in all points like you, only without sin.' But this position has another side. All sufferings have another beside that which is at first presented to the view, in the aspect of bare endurance. This position of helplessness was one of peculiar nobility. It was one in which Christ could and did exercise great mastery over SELF—over what would have been the impulses of mere human nature.

Power rightly used—is always noble; and Christ used His power to remain where, and as, He was. There was perfect mastery over 'self.'

Now, it is in this way that we are to look at positions of helplessness. We are not to fret ourselves about, or lament over, our apparent feebleness; we are really altogether above what they seem to be. And it is by this thought that we are to comfort, and strengthen, and calm ourselves, in all our trial times, when the trial assumes this form.

God wills us to have perceptive power for true honor—for that which lies underneath the outward husk and show of things—for that which is so in His eyes. And we may be sure the true honor is to be found in all positions in which He places us; many a sick-bed is a greater place of power than a throne—when the one who lies helpless there, has mastery over his self. The pierced feet were to all human appearance, in a place of weakness; but they are in reality, a place of power; and so it may be with us. Let us see what underlies our position when we are pierced and helpless; and we shall often become not only contented—but even satisfied with our lot. This piercing was a part of a great accomplishment. It was not a final position, and Jesus knew this well. It was a part of a great whole; and Jesus put it in its proper place. He knew that for a few hours the feet must be pierced; and as terrible as that piercing was, He appropriated to it its own place—but no more. And this is the very way in which we are to deal with our piercings, however bitter they may be at the time. They are not final. They do not form a perfect circle in themselves. They are but a part of a great whole; and that great whole means glory to God, and profit and comfort and everything good to ourselves.

Jesus knew that for a little while, that His pierced feet were in the appointed place; but that yet after a little while, and they would come forth from the grave, and ascend from the mount; and that beneath those feet His enemies would be subdued, and become His footstool. When we allow our sufferings to assume an aspect of finality, and completeness in themselves, we give them a power over us which is not according to the ordinance of God. We put more into the suffering than He ever intended to be there. We throw it out of gear; and looking at it by itself, and as unconnected with other things, we become depressed and confused, and often take up altogether a wrong train of thought with reference to it.

We are living in a fragment in every possible way—in a fragment of time—in a fragment of experience; and if we persist in making a part the whole—we will go altogether astray.

Jesus, we can well believe, assigned to the piercing of His feet—its proper place as a part of the great accomplishment; and let us try to connect our individual sorrows with the great whole. No

doubt we have the disadvantage of being ignorant of what the whole is; but we need not be troubled about that. It is in the main—God's glory, and our truest and largest good—good, for the bringing about of which it may be that these sufferings were absolutely necessary, though we know not why. And thus the cross connects itself in an unexpected way—with our daily life; not only as regards the great sacrifice hanging thereon—but as regards the incidentals of that sacrifice also. Those pierced feet are in connection with sofas and beds, and reduced finances, and trials of many a kind. There are lines of union drawn between them all—and the cross; every one of our piercings has a counterpart in those of Christ. And especially if we are acting nobly, in intelligent appreciation of God's will and glory in our trial. For all noble things—lead up to the cross. They turn to that, as plants in a dark place to the light. They rise there as incense when set free by fire, ascends in perfumed clouds towards the sky.

There is great strength and uplifting from the consciousness of sympathy with Jesus. We may, if we use the words aright, say 'His head and ours,' 'His hands and ours,' 'His feet and ours.'

Yes! these may be one in the performance of God's will, in sympathy with the Divine mind. We may go through all our sufferings—in this oneness with our Lord, seeing deeper than the world sees, and fulfilling a mission which not only the world—but, perhaps, even our nearest and dearest friends may not understand.

Let us note too, the position of those feet in relation to the enemies of Christ. His foes thought they had so pinned them to the accursed tree as to bar all future progress. Little did they know future destiny of His feet—the progress which they were to make because they took up this position on the cross. They did not know that His feet would ascend on high; that they would return in power, and stand on Olivet. His feet had a mission as pierced—which they never could have had otherwise; the cross is their starting point. And where do they travel now? Let us rather ask where do they not traverse? It is with pierced feet that Jesus comes to me now; it is with pierced feet He leads me—and the leadings and the visitings of pierced feet are very precious.

It may be that in the hot sunshine of the world—that we seek such leadings but little, and but little care for such visiting. It is not pierced feet we wish to see crossing our threshold, we are not in sympathy with them; but when the glare is subdued, when we are so wrought upon by the Spirit's mellowing influences as to be willing to receive Jesus as He really is, as God sets Him forth, and not as we would have Him—then we rejoice to see the piercings of the feet! For when Christ with such feet leads on before us—we are willing to follow after. We say, 'Here is one skilled in all of suffering. Here is one experienced in personal trial. He will lead softly, and surely, and tenderly. He will not set the pierced foot down too roughly. And when He comes to me—how gently, how meekly, albeit He is the Lord of glory, will He enter into my house!'

There will be none of the roughness of mere human authority about Him, no heavy tread, no tramp as of an armed man—but the soft step of a pierced foot.

There are many, alas! how many houses, the threshold of which Jesus would not have been allowed to pass with pierced feet. These would remind the dwellers therein, too much of the claims of the suffering One; beside which, they have enough in the world; they have no sympathy with a suffering One, they neither want Him to understand them—nor do they want to understand Him.

They think that the leadings of the One with pierced feet—can only be into piercings for themselves, that He has no paths but those of sorrow, or gloom. But the pierced feet can tread in very pleasant places; they know the way to paths of peace—they cross streams which sparkle, and meadows which flower, and heights from which distant views can be obtained; they know the cool places of the valleys; and here, as well as on rough hard stones, they often lead, and then such places are safe! When the feet of Jesus go before us—we can have no hurt.

We may here note how the pierced feet help to present us with a view of the perfection of the suffering of Christ. His whole person—from head to foot is marked as it were with these piercings—the head is crowned with thorns; the feet are pierced with nails. And at either end—we find the sounds of mockery. Pilate inscribes over the crown of thorns 'The King of the Jews!' The Jews themselves mock at His feet, saying, "If you are the Son of God—come down from the cross!" Is this without any meaning for us? Surely a Christ, as perfect as He was from head to foot in suffering, must be especially precious to us who have so many sorrows, and of such various kinds.

Nowhere can trouble come upon us—but that He is prepared with experimental sympathy. The head, the hands, the side, the feet—are all pierced. The whole man bears the marks of woe! In our many sorrows, let us look at His completeness of suffering. Suffer however we may—let us turn to Him, and there shall we find that He suffered also! Let the spear, or the thorns, or the nails, touch us where it will, we shall be able to say, 'I am sympathized with, and understood by the One with the pierced feet!'

01.12. Chapter 12 The feet of Jesus—which went about

Chapter 12 The feet of Jesus—which went about DOING GOOD When Peter opened his mouth to teach Cornelius and those who were with him, he spoke of 'how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and curing all who were under the tyranny of the Devil, because God was with Him.' Acts 10:38.

How full that good was, we can see from Matthew 4:23, where we are told that, "Jesus was going all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Thus, and thus only were the feet of Jesus occupied on earth. In this work they went on long travel—in this they were weary, dirt-stained, and unrefreshed; if the history of each foot-fall could be written, it would contain some portion of the story of His love to man. And yet these are the feet of which we read here, as pierced and torn—these are the feet which men nailed to the cross! The ingratitude which they showed would be in itself enough to furnish subject matter for long sad thought. And with the ingratitude, the folly, and the madness. For they were recklessly shutting up the means of their choicest blessing; forbidding all other journeys for good; saying that no more would the feet of the Healer travel through their land—to the home of the sick, and the tombs of the dead; no more would those feet of the Teacher go through coast and village, and into temple and synagogues bearing God's last and greatest message to them.

They crowned with thorns—the head which had never thought of them but for good! They pierced with a spear—the heart which had never felt towards them but love! They nailed the hands which had fed and healed them; and the feet, which had journeyed only to carry blessing hither and there throughout their land.

Sin is indeed a guilty madness, and nowhere is it more plainly seen so than here, when sinful man nails his best benefactor to a cross! But let us turn our attention to one or two other thoughts, from which we get important teaching for ourselves. And first of all, we observe that this great injury to Jesus, is suffered in the very instrument of blessing to man.

Now this is in itself enough to raise some questionings within our hearts.

Why did not the goodness of Jesus protect Him from this indignity and suffering, and this tragic ending to His mission of doing good?

Jesus came into the world, as it was from its first days of sin—from the time of the murdered Abel, when goodness attracted injury, instead of repelling injury. He was in the world, not 'very good' as He had made it—but evil as it had become. And the evil of man was such—that He was not worthy to live. Now this comes home practically to many of the children of God, and all the more so, the more like they are to Christ.

God's people often allow themselves in very mistaken ideas, with regard to their position in the world.

They expect to be appreciated, to be valued. They think that for their very usefulness and the good they do—that they will find help and not hindrance, honor and not shame. They are vexed at the injustice and the stupidity of those with whom they have to do, in not recognizing the value of their work.

Let them look at the cross; at the head and hands, and feet, which are all pierced there! And when they have looked, say, 'the disciple is not above his master.' Their piercings have this characteristic in common with His. But we sometimes have thoughts in this matter connected with God Himself. Sometimes in folly, sometimes in bewilderment, sometimes in ignorance, we think when we see health, and property, and position, which were used for advancing good—taken away; and illness, and loss, and the 'antagonism of the world' taking their place—that this ought not to be! We think that all such blessings and opportunities should be spared; in a word, that no cross should be laid on them!

Here is a man who spent the bulk of what he had, in doing good; and now, in a moment—it is all taken from him! All his money has been stolen, and so far as doing good goes—he is nailed hand and foot. Barabbas gets off scot free—but the man of God is practically crucified with his Lord. The staggering of David comes upon us—and we have need to go into the sanctuary of the Lord to understand this.

Into that sanctuary Jesus doubtless went. Amid the many thoughts which flooded His mind as He hung upon the accursed tree, these, perhaps, may have had place. When the last breath was parting, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit!" But who can tell what He had been suffering as He hung there!

We may rest assured that there is a solution to all dark dispensations of this kind; they are the mysteries of God. And He who allows them to enter into His plans—can unravel the if He sees fit. They are not out of place, because they are inexplicable.

What is meant by such permissions of evil, we know not now—but we shall know hereafter; but meanwhile, we may understand enough to steady us when we see these things happening; and, perhaps, even to make us enter with some degree of fullness and power into the mind and will of God. When money, and health, and influence, and the like, are taken away—there is often the mystery of a higher call. So it was with Jesus. His sacred feet are seized, and nailed, and hindered—and man proclaims that they shall move no more. But in that nailing they received the mystery of a higher call—they were given a wider sphere—the nail which pinned them to the cross enlarged the boundary of their mission, and gave them the world, and not only Judea for a sphere. He belonged to the Jews; but that nail lifted Him off the soil of Judea; and not only were the Jews to look on Him whom they had pierced—but the nations also; and for everyone who believes that He was bruised for our iniquities—that by His stripes we are healed—and that it was our sins, which nailed Him to the accursed tree. And now with pierced feet Jesus traverses the world. Wherever the story of the cross reaches, so must it come as a tale of many woundings. Thus only can Jesus approach a poor sinner—yes, thus only wills He to approach him; and thus only should he, on his part, wish to see Jesus. Who can tell what a far-reaching prospect Jesus had from the cross? We are told that for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame—and this may have been one of the helps to His endurance. It was the will of His Father that Jesus should traverse Judea for awhile, bearing with Him blessing wherever He went. But that

was to be only for a time—there was a deeper will to be fulfilled; and terrible as were the shame and pain of the cross, the words of Jesus' heart, as His feet were transfixed to it, were these, "I delight to do Your will, O my God!"

And, in truth, when we have served God with what we have had at our disposal, be it health, wealth, position, or anything else—and these are removed, by a providential dispensation, from us—we must not for a moment look upon ourselves as removed from the power to fulfill the will of God, or a high destiny. We must rather seek to have our eyes open to see that we are now called to the fulfillment of a deeper will. And though we see it not, and flesh and blood would choose it not—our call has been in unity with the mind of God, which mind has passed on into something deeper—more for the eternal glory, than anything that has hitherto been revealed as to our career. The stillness of those feet of Jesus, nailed to the accursed tree, was a fulfillment of the deeper will of the Father. The hour had come—and now His activity must cease for a season, the sandal must be unbound, the nail must be driven and fixed. And may we see the fulfillment of 'God's will' in all our times of enforced cessation—it may be even painful cessation from service; in all our sad exchanges of that which is pleasant, for that which is hard to flesh and blood.

If we see that which is made ill use of taken away, we are inclined to say, 'it is a just judgment of God!' But if that which is being made a good use of is taken away—we are inclined to be staggered and bewildered. But we shall not stagger, if we say to ourselves, 'I am now going into God's deeper will—obedience is better than sacrifice; it is more to the glory of God that I should fulfill His will by apparent personal extinction, when He appoints that for me—than by any ministry, no matter how much in outward appearance, for His glory. "He must increase—but I must decrease!"

Let us also steadily keep in view—the idea of SERVICE. When these feet of Jesus became pierced, they entered upon a higher form of service than they had yet assumed. The piercing was essential to this. The feet which had done well during life, were not now laid aside, they were placed in service of a different kind. And as to us, if our will is like the will of Jesus, ready for anything that God wills, we shall never be thrown aside—we shall never be put down to lower service. We may be apparently so—but not really; for He who ordains our service knows what is in it—what of glory to Himself—what of honor to us.

Therefore, should all our instruments of usefulness fail us—even the very members of our body; let us but have faith and obedience, and let the mind which was in Jesus, as He allowed His feet to be nailed to the cross, be in us; and our apparent laying aside may be our highest service.

One more observation we would make. This piercing, which appeared to put an end to Jesus altogether, was, in point of fact, only an end to His human suffering. The long journeys were now all ended—the many wearinesses—the footsore of travel—the goings about far away from His Father's home. The piercing of those feet was the way to everlasting rest—an unlikely way, to all human appearance; but the best way in the mind of God.

Ah! how little do we know of the way to long, deep rest! How different is our way of seeking it—from that in which God pleases to send it! How often do we think that our great trial can bring us 'no peace', while in very truth, it may bring us our greatest rest.

Sad indeed to every Christian, must be the contemplation of the pierced feet of Jesus; but now as we look back upon the crucifixion, our feeling of sadness may be tempered with satisfaction. We think not only of what the piercings have done for us—but also of what they did for Him—that they ended a life of sorrow, and were the immediate preparations for the commencement of a life of unending and unutterable joy!

The Feet Which Had Been Lovingly Tended

There are no cups of such unmingled bitterness, as not to have in them one drop of what is sweet; and the cup of life which Christ drank was no exception to the rule.

True! His smiles were few, His friends were few, sunshine did not often fall upon Him—but He did rejoice in spirit; there were some who loved Him—there were some homes where He was welcome—there were those who ministered to Him of their substance, who looked on Him with reverence, who poured out their hearts in love to Him. And so Jesus, fulfilling His lot as man, put Himself even by these small enjoyments under the solemn power of contrast.

These feet which are now pierced with the cruel nails, were once washed with tears, and wiped with the hair of a loving woman's head. They had been tended with unusual evidences of love.

It may have been, that the remembrance of this love came along with the piercing of the nail; and that the mind of Jesus, acute in all its susceptibilities and powers, put the stroke of the executioner, and the tenderness of the woman, side by side.

It was but a little while before, and perhaps the contrast of the 'Hosannahs!' and the 'Crucify Him!' had given Him food enough for melancholy thought; and now the anointing with tears, and the transfixing with nails, may have presented themselves side by side. In that intense rush of true human misery which, though He was the Son of God—yet came to Him on the cross as the Son of man—the weight of this contrast may have been felt.

It is a sad thought that, we cannot have any enjoyment but what carries within it—a seed of possible sorrow. Pure and, so to speak, perfect as regards itself, as we look at it now, and turn it every way, we can see no trouble clinging to it, nor can we see why any should do so. But we are not able to look forward far enough, and to see how it will link itself with some future woe. The laugh of the curly-headed child which now fills my heart with gladness—may be destined to make doubly bitter the hour when I shall be left alone. The oneness with a heart which beats with my heart, may only make more bewildered and lonely, my condition—when that heart has ceased to beat. We do not say that such thoughts are to be indulged, or to be gone in search of; misery enough will come to meet us—without going to look for it! We only say that in providing one of the two elements necessary for contrast, every present pleasure—has in it the power of pointing with double anguish some future woe.

"By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept—when we remembered you, O Zion." "Oh that I were as in months past," says Job, "as in the days when God preserved me, when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness;" and then two whole chapters are filled with an account of what he had been—and what he then was! In Ezra chapter 3, "When the builders completed the foundation of the Lord's Temple, the priests put on their robes and took their places to blow their trumpets. And the Levites clashed their cymbals to praise the

Lord." But there were those who had seen the previous temple, and better days—they were old now—but their memory was young; and the power of contrast came with terrible force on them. "Many of the older priests, Levites, and other leaders remembered the first Temple, and they wept aloud when they saw the new Temple's foundation."

If Jesus had never experienced a kindness, never heard a 'Hosanna', never had a Mary to anoint Him, or a John to lie in His bosom, or even a grateful Gadarene to ask to be always with Him—His position on the cross would have been so far ameliorated that, it would have had less in it of this element of contrast. But would it have been well that it should have been ameliorated, that even one drop of its bitterness should have been diluted, one grain of it removed? We may be sure it would not. Contrast works both ways, as from joy to sorrow, so from sorrow to joy. Our Lord notes the double action in John 16 : "Truly, truly, I say unto you—that you shall weep and lament—but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful—but your sorrow shall be turned into joy!" Then He illustrates it from a well-known fact in common life, and adds, "And you now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice—and your joy no man takes from you." The power which wrought backward—was able to work forward too; and as Jesus endured the cross, the joy set before Him no doubt wrought upon His mind.

It was with Jesus—as we are sure it ever is with His people who suffer with a mind akin to His—the immense and glorious future was able to out-weigh altogether the past joy. The joy of the past was nothing—in comparison with that which was to come. He, as man, shared in the great law of bounty, by which His Father ordains that that which we sow, and allow to die at His command, shall spring up an hundred-fold, and a thousand-fold. The pierced One sowed a contrast, to reap a contrast—the contrast of the preciousness of the little love He had experienced and His present piercing—with these same piercings and the future adorings of individuals, the love of millions—all those wonders of Revelation chapter 5—the falling down before the Lamb—the mingling of the voices of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, whose number was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; whose cry was this: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing! The response to whose cry came loud and long from all places—for every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, re-echoed the ascription of praise; and said, Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever; and the living creatures say amen, and the four-and-twenty elders fall down and worship Him that lives forever and ever.' As I write of this great glory, I can scarcely believe that a moment ago I was at the cross—and that it is at pierced feet the elders fall down and worship! I too say Amen! You have right nobly won it all, O Christ. Amen and amen! But now we must come back to ourselves, our little concerns; for in truth they are all-important to us, and our blessed Savior knows that they are so. He will allow us to use His cross, on which He perfected our great atonement, as our teacher, our comforter in the contrasts, in the midst of which we are set.

What a chapter might be written upon such deep condescensions of the cross—how it is our comforter as well as our reprovener, our vivifier as well as our destroyer of self; how it heals as well as wounds; how it whispers as well as thunders; how it stoops low beneath the humblest roofs, as well as towers high above the loftiest thrones! The once lovingly tended—but now pierced feet of

Jesus teach me, then, these lessons. When sorrow comes upon me, I must meet the contrast of the present—with the past; with another contrast, even that of the present—with the future. But to do this I must of course have a future. I am privileged to sorrow, not as those without hope—but then I must have the hope. And so it will be a good thing to dwell upon future blessedness, even when it is not wanted as a compensation for the present sorrow; to have the blessedness always vivid, always at hand. All thoughts of the future are not to be set down as dreamy and unpractical; our present is always connected with a past and a future; and we should let a blessed future exercise its power.

Alas! the world is full of those who have no future; those, whose chief thought concerning the future is to reduce it to nothingness as far as they can. The future can be no help to them. But it ought to be much to the believer; he should see it as God's antidote to sorrow. What it was to our Lord, it may well be to us.

We may be sure that our heavenly Father allows no trouble to come upon His people, without its own balancings and compensations. As no temptation is permitted without the means withal of escape—so no trouble is permitted without the means of endurance. But, as in the matter of the temptation, the way of escape is not always visible at once, so in that of trouble. We must recollect ourselves; we must call to mind the promised future; we must bring our spiritual being into the trial; and then will come the peace.

Another lesson which I learn is, 'the sobering power of contrast.'

These pierced feet, are those which as we have seen were once anointed with very precious ointment; which were washed with tears; which were even wiped with the hairs of the head. When we remember that thus it was with the Lord—how will it balance us when we seem likely to be intoxicated by present honor, or respect, or wealth, or joy! To attempt to be taken by force one day, to be made a king—and shortly after, to be taken by force to a cross—has its counterpart oftentimes in our life. Who is there that has not suffered from unbalanced joy; that has not at some time been run away with by the steed on whose neck he flung the rein! We have probably all suffered more or less from not having kept ourselves in check; but we probably have experiences enough to fall back upon, if we will only call them to mind, from which we can choose correctives for the future, able to balance us by the power of contrast.

Another voice which comes to me from this cross, to which are affixed the pierced feet, is this. Let us do all that we can, while we can—yet the time may come when we can no longer work—but must stand helplessly by. Our Lord Himself says, "the poor you have always with you—but me you have not always." No ointment could be poured on the feet when on the cross—the time had passed for that; those who would have anointed those feet with their life-blood if they could—can now do no more than stand helplessly by.

Even as regards earthly love and its tender ministrations, the cross condescends to teach this lesson. It says, 'Show love while you can! You may have opportunities in abundance today—but you may soon be debarred from doing forever. Even in such little things as these, what bitter thoughts may we lay up for ourselves. As we painfully see some dear one slowly drag one leg after the other; a long day's journey now, from the bed to the sofa, and from the sofa to the bed again—how glad we would now be to walk miles with him; but we recall the time when we refused

to go here or there at his request to gratify him. With eyes half closed, some dear one lies all day, and when they are opened it is weariedly and languidly, to be closed again without having taken any notice; and we sit by the bedside and think, how we refused, at some time or other, to show him something, or to gladden that eye with a cheerful look or smile. Perhaps, even in the matter of the day's food—we cared but little to make it palatable; and now we lay dainties beside the sick one's couch—but it is too late, they are untasted—even untouched; the time for being able to minister to him has past—and now it has slipped away beyond their reach. The cross, in its graciousness of teaching, condescends even to these things, and says, 'In common life—let it not be so.' I would echo the voice of the cross. I would say, 'Lay up for yourself, so far as it may be done in and by things of this life,' strong consolations by a life-long ministry of love. Be sowing seed every day you live, which shall sprout, and ear, and be garnered by the bed side, by the coffin and grave side of those you love. Those who sow deeds of love, shall reap loving memories; and memories shall do wonders when the time comes for them to act. They will sit by the lonely hearth—and people it; they will come into the desolate heart—and sing in it; they will command the desert—to blossom as the rose, and turn the dry ground into water springs.

Fresh herbage carpets the roadside of the one who has yet many milestones to pass alone; and however dusty and hard his daily walk, he may turn aside and journey onwards amid the freshness of the dew of herbs; every loving word and deed in the past is like a grass blade—each one distinct—all offering themselves as a velvet carpet to his tender feet. If to dwell in unity be like the dew of heaven—like what dew, in its sparkling and refreshing, must it be to have dwelt amid perfect and unwearied ministries of love! But enough of ourselves, we must turn back again to Christ; the voice of teaching says, 'tend His pierced feet—while you can.' But how can we, for now His feet are like unto fine brass, as though it was burnished in a furnace.

He Himself has told us how it may be done. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren—you have done it unto Me."

Let us picture to ourselves, what our feelings would be—if we were now to see the feet of Jesus nailed to the cross. As we stood by them and looked up into that pain-stricken yet patient face, we would say, 'What can I do for the One hanging there for me?' We would say, 'What can I do—which I have left undone?' We should question ourselves, and no doubt condemn ourselves too. But we are more favorably circumstanced than this. No doubt we have much to condemn ourselves for—for we have left undone that which we should have done—but as yet there is time to do. Yes, we may, as it were, give comfort to the One upon the cross; we may spend upon Him, we may tend Him. Let us do so while we can. The day will certainly come when we can do so no more—because we shall have passed out of the sphere in which it is appointed that such things may be done. We believe that there will be plenty of glorious service in the life to come; but we believe that all such as is connected with fellowship in Christ's sufferings, must cease.

Much of present service is of this character; if we would perform such ministrations of love—we must do so now. No doubt, the so doing will bring its own peculiar reward. That reward will probably connect itself with the sweetness of memory's retrospects. We need no vivid imagination to picture it to ourselves. Just think for a moment of looking at those feet in glory with the marks—the ineffable marks of the nails in them; and of being able to hold sweet talk within ourselves about what we did for them, and to them. The time will have passed for all such sayings

as, 'We saw You hungry—and fed You. We saw You sick or in prison—and visited You.' We shall know all about that; it will be explained to us how it was, and we [knowing then the connection between Jesus and His people] shall understand it. And we shall feel, 'O how sweet to think that I did not neglect those precious feet—that I eased them, that I honored them, that I anointed, washed, wiped them; that once I rested them, and always, dust-covered as they were, honored them.' Would it not be heaven just to go about saying that to ourselves? and oh, how much more a heaven to hear Jesus saying it to us; and, perhaps, to meet with others, now this one and now that, and to hear from them what they did, and to tell them what we did.

'Stop!' perhaps the reader says, this will foster pride; 'did not the accepted ones humbly say, that they had done nothing at all?' Ah, yes—but as we have said, the time for this has past; they believe what Jesus spoke, when He said how they had done it to His very self; they have no false modesty—any more than foolish pride; all things are now seen in their real light, and they shall know the full value of what they did, and rejoice in it, and perhaps hold sweet communion with each other about it. With the close of this life, and our passage from this scene of sorrow, ends the opportunity for all this! Let us lay up, then, for ourselves this treasure in heaven—sweet memories, ever to be renewed at the sight of the One who was pierced for us!

There is one more remark to be made before we pass on from this branch of the subject. We must expect vicissitudes even as they were the portion of our Lord.

We would gladly always have the tendings and the tenderness of love—an unchecked life; but as He was upon the earth, even so are we. Therefore, when the changes come—let us betake ourselves to the cross. Let us sit down, not at the feet of some Gamaliel to teach us philosophy—but at the pierced feet of Jesus, to learn the philosophy of the cross. To us it may now be a still, calm place; we may just sit there and think—look and think, and think and look again. I say nothing of the thorns in the head, or the nails in the hands, or the wound in the side; I see enough in this my time of woeful change, to calm, and teach, and strengthen my heart, if I use the sight aright, in the once lovingly tended—but now pierced, 'feet of Jesus.'

01.13. Chapter 13 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Worship

Chapter 13 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Worship

Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." Matthew 28:9-10

Krummacher may well attribute to that saying in John 20:17, "a depth of meaning which has never yet been explored by man." There Jesus says to Mary, "Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to My brothers and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father—to My God and your God." But a very short period had elapsed since the positive prohibition to Mary to touch Him, and now we find no hindrance put in the way of these disciples; they hold Him by the feet and worship Him. The events of the forty days after the resurrection are very full of mystery—more so than any period in our Lord's life; the forty days' temptation in the wilderness alone coming near them in mystery. None, we may imagine, if imagination might have any place here, would the Lord have been better pleased to allow to touch Him than this one to whom He had been so gracious, and whom He loved so well; but to her came the decided prohibition, "Do not hold on to Me."

We could not pass by some consideration of this refusal of Mary's touch; because one of the first questions which would suggest itself to the Mind on reading this touching by the disciples in the passage before us, would be, "Why were they allowed to touch Jesus—and why was she forbidden?" The idea of Mary, then, being that she was to have her Lord, even as He had been to her before—Jesus had to meet that mistaken thought, and He does so at the fittest time, and in the best way.

Jesus had spoken marvelously to this favored woman when He uttered her name—the simple word "Mary." He had come near her with an inward living voice and thrill, and now He immediately retreats from her again, for she interprets humanly—what He interprets divinely; she in an earthly—but He in a heavenly sense. It is as though He said, "The relation between us is somewhat changed; my former life with you will return no more—but after a brief time of transition my elevation to the Father will come—all this from the beginning you must know and ponder well."

Let us return to Mary in the garden. She sees Jesus alive once more before her. She hears Him, as of old, call her by her name; He is hers, she thinks, again—hers as He had been before; hers not to be torn from her again. All the warmth of those former days of familiar friendship filling her glad heart, she offers Him not the homage of a higher worship—but addresses Him as He did her; "Rabboni," she says—my own, my old, my well-loved Master. She makes some gesture as of embracing him. Gently—but firmly our Lord repels the too warm, too human, too familiar approach. "Do not hold on to Me, Mary. You think of me as given back to be to you the same exactly that I was before. You are mistaken; our relationship is changed; our method of fellowship must be altered. You must learn to think of me and to act towards me differently from what you ever did

before; I am here—but it is only for a short season. I am on earth—but I am now on my way to my Father; my home is no longer with you and the others here below, it is there with my Father, up in heaven; still shall I feel to you and all the others as tenderly as I ever felt, not ashamed to call them still my brethren. Touch me not, then, Mary; stop not to lavish on me an affection that has in it too much of the human, and too little of the divine; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, 'I ascend to my Father, and to your Father, and to my God and to your God; my Father and my God in a sense in which He is not and cannot be yours; but your Father and your God in a sense in which He could not have been yours had I not died and risen, and been on my way now to sit down with Him on the throne of glory in the heavens.'

We see, then, that there were good reasons why Mary should not be allowed to touch the Lord; but no such reasons existed in the case of these women. They were in the act of fulfilling the commission given to them by the angels, when He met them with greeting, saying, 'Greetings.' It was the same Jesus who thus acted so differently, forbidding even a touch to one; and permitting what might be called a long holding to others. The like thing happens continually now in the fellowship between Jesus and His people.

It is the same Christ who acts—but the actings are in opposite directions. Sometimes we stumble at this. We measure what He does—by our slight knowledge of people's circumstances, feelings, dangers, temptations, and we think we know what indeed is only known to Him. We may be certain that in every instance there is a specific adaptation to the individual need. The permitting to one may seem very large, and the withholding to another very strict; and, moreover, we may think that the one from whom a heart's desire is withheld, is the very one to whom it should be given. But let us say, 'It is the Lord, shall He not do as He will with His own, shall He not act out of the fullness of His own knowledge, both as regards us and the interests of His kingdom?'

Jesus thus dealt differently with people who seemed apparently to be in much the same position. They all loved Him, they were all bereft, they were all disciples. But the sameness of position is very often only apparent, there is fundamental difference. We may safely leave it to Jesus—how to treat the case of each disciple and loved one. And is it not a great comfort to know that He will wisely decide? What would become of us if He did not—how exalted some would become, how set in slippery places; and how depressed others, how cast into gloom.

All things here seem jumbled up together; but with Him and in His dealings with us, there will be wise and particular dealings.

Only let us make sure that it is 'the Lord' with whom we have to do; and that point secured, all will be well.

We perceive, too, that there is that permitted (because it could be done so harmlessly) to those in the way of active duty—which may be dangerous to one whose soul is simply filled with pious feelings. The Lord requires of us all, that we should not find our rest in the moments of sweet communion with Him, not seek, as it were, to touch Him in love too much mingled with selfish ingredients—but go forth with our commission into life, to do the work for which He sends us.

Indeed this holding thus permitted to these women while in the activity of a high ministry, even the bearing of a message of the resurrection to the disciples, occupies a particularly safe and happy place. It is preceded by a "Greetings!" it is followed by a "Do not be afraid." It was made safe to

them by the position in which it was bestowed, and by the command to them to proceed in the mission on which they were. To them this privilege might have been no more safe than to Mary, had not the command to be up and speed upon their way been quickly given. It is the balance of the Christian life—we are not constructed for communion without activity, nor for activity without communion—the mingling of the two is Christian life. David connected them then together, "I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart."

We see here, also, one of the surprises of the spiritual life. There are such, even as in the life natural. What could be such a joyful surprise as this appearance of the Savior to the disciples on the road? Surely the spiritual life is not the dull and uneventful one which some suppose. The people of the world look upon it as one of monotony, with no events, no changes, no pleasures, no healthy excitements—but this is only because they do not know it. No doubt it has its alternations from joy to sorrow—but also those from sorrow to joy. If there are heavy days for Zion when her children sit down by the waters of Babylon and weep, there are others where the Lord, having turned their captivity, they are like unto them that dream.

We are reminded also of the blessed confirmations which there are in the spiritual life. The angel's words, "He is not here, he is risen," are assured as true to them by the Lord Himself. It was the highest confirmation which they could get. The wonders which the Samaritan woman told her people, were attested by the Savior, so that they believed, not because of her word—but because of the confirmation which they received with their own ears. And, surely, among His dealings of blessing with His people, this confirmation is not to be forgotten. We hear from ministers, we read in books, this and that good thing about Him; who can confirm them to us like Himself?

If we simply believe, (however much amazed and confused we may be)—and obey—for being found in the path of obedience is everything, then our faith shall receive confirmation. It may be in an unlikely and unexpected way—but it will be in God's way. God has His own confirmations for those who are in the path of active faith, as suitable to us at the particular time and under our particular circumstances—as wonderful, as gracious as this permission to the women to hold the Savior by the feet and worship Him.

01.14. Chapter 14 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Comfort

Chapter 14 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Comfort "Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet." Luke 24:40.

We have seen the Lord prohibit a touch in the case of Mary, and permit it in the case of those whom He met in the way, and who fell at His feet and worshiped Him. Now we see Him even offering Himself to the touch of all who were gathered together in that guarded chamber, saying, "Look at My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself! Touch Me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have. Having said this, He showed them His hands and feet."

We can easily in some degree imagine the terror of these disciples at this sudden apparition of their Lord. The solemn and wonderful events of the last few days, following each other in such quick succession—the strange matters unaccounted for, and unaccountably connected with the resurrection—had left them in anything but a favorable condition for the reception of their Lord with any degree of calmness, coming as He did in so mysterious a way.

There has been much controversy as to the Lord's entrance through the door—as to the nature of His body, and as to how He entered. Some think He knocked and was given admittance, some that He entered immediately after the Emmaus disciples, before the door was again shut; but the whole tone and words of the narrative point to a silent, sudden manifestation of Himself—"He Himself stood among them." Connected with these speculations as to how the Lord entered the room, are others connected with the nature of His body. We need not for our purpose enter upon these.

Let us take up a few thoughts of practical teaching and comfort for ourselves.

Observe here, one calm One—and many agitated ones; and the calm One ministering out of Himself to the agitated ones. Such is the picture presented to us here, and the like is often reproduced in the church, and in individual souls. If we could have seen the horror-stricken countenances of the apostles and disciples, and the calm, sweet look of Christ—these would have taught us more than all that could be written on the subject. The church is privileged to rejoice in the presence of an ever calm, collected Lord. Conscious of His power, and dignity, and feelings, and of what He is, and what we are—He is ever calm—not uninterested, but not anxious; not nervous—yet not nerveless; above all agitations—but not above feeling for those who are subject to them.

We accept this picture as a typical one; we would realize it in all the agitations and weaknesses, and affrights of our spiritual, yes, and even our temporal life. In all our agitations, our soul will crave the presence of some calm one on whom we may lean. Our own friends and relatives will very possibly not supply all our need—and even if they do in some measure, that 'some' will not be enough. We shall have to go deeper than they; we shall have to hear Jesus saying, 'Look to Me!' And how is it that Jesus ministers to our fears? When the disciples were in the boat tossed with

waves, and He came to them, and they thought it to be a ghost, He said, "It is I—do not be afraid;" and now He says here, "It is I, myself!"

Surely it would be a wonderful sight, if we could see Jesus thus ministering now—revealing Himself, His intense reality, His human sympathy and feelings to multitudes of fearful ones scattered here and there. In Himself He contains a well-spring of peace and comfort enough for all. He would have us, at all these times, still our souls with a deep and thorough consciousness that it is His very self with whom we have to do, "Behold my hands and my feet!" "He showed unto them his hands and his feet."

It was by this manifestation that the Lord set right, the thoughts which had arisen in the hearts of this terrified company. Their "thoughts" had reference doubtless to that which they saw before them—but could not understand. There is no reason to suppose that they thought that this was any other than Jesus, or that they were not aware that it actually was Jesus; but then what was He exactly, appearing under these strange circumstances? They evidently thought Him to be a spirit—not a ghost as in Matthew 14:26—but the actual Lord Himself, only without a body. The disciples believed that it was Jesus—but one different from their own well-known Jesus.

Now the Lord meant to reassure them—to show them that He was not pure spirit—that He was His very self, and consequently their very own Jesus. For these two thoughts are bound together: if He showed them that He was His very self—He would at the same time show them that He was their very own. The tie between them had been broken only so far as death could break it, and now Jesus shows that death's doings have been undone, so He gives visual demonstration—He shows them "his hands and his feet."

These were pierced—and it was the will of Christ that He should present Himself to His disciples, even as He does to all now, as "the crucified One."

It was in relation to Him as the crucified One, that they were to stand for the future, and forever; they, in common with the whole church; the proof therefore which He condescends to give in the first case is the exhibition of the marks of crucifixion.

It is thus, indeed, that Jesus wills ever to be recognized! "I am indeed the same One who was with you before death, it is my whole human personality, and not merely as a spirit." The disciples have now to comprehend and take in the idea of their Lord's new and risen life—but as a life bound up with the past. And thus it is to be with us. The new, the resurrection, the ascension life of Jesus is ours; but in all our graspings after realizing it, we must steadily keep in view the old life—its trials and its cross.

Surely the crucified feet should be to us, at least, who can calmly look back upon the whole history of Jesus—the best exposition of the present glory of the feet burning like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace. All the manifestations which we shall have throughout eternity of the Lord—will be connected with His piercings. The many crowns which are on His head are all linked to the many piercings of that one crown of thorns which the soldiers plaited, and with which they mockingly adorned His brow.

"It is I Myself," said Jesus; and then immediately there comes the showing of the wounds. Oh what a stilling to all heart fear—'He and His wounds!' Oh blessed thought that henceforth He never can

be separated from those wounds!

Just so, He presents Himself to all of us, so would He have us present Him to all others—saying to them, "It is He Himself—behold His pierced hands and feet!" And when thoughts arise in our hearts—as from time to time they will—fears, and qualms, and surmisings, and doubtings, coming unbidden, coming we know not whence, brooding thoughts, disturbing thoughts—thoughts impossible to grasp, which by their very shadowy nature terrify us, or depress us—then, for these, Christ has for all time provided an antidote in the incident which we have been considering now. Against all such thoughts—He presents something solid—so solid that even our gross natures need require no more: He speaks—He shows—He says, "It is I myself," He shows His pierced hands and feet.

01.15. Chapter 15 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Manifested Glory

Chapter 15 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Manifested Glory "His feet were like fine bronze glowing in a furnace!" Revelation 1:15 At length we come to a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, in manifest, unclouded, and perfect glory.

We have seen Him wayfaring in Judea, lying in a grave, and giving to His people but fitful glances of Himself after His resurrection— but now He is manifested in fullness of light.

It is true, this manifestation is of but partial use to us; for as yet we can but little understand anything of His great glory; but what little we can gather up and comprehend, is of great value. That vision of the once travel-stained—but now glorious feet, may be very helpful to us even in what remains to us of our pilgrimage through the dusty paths of life. The glory manifested to us here is magnificent. It is as complete as grand. It presents Christ from head to foot. In the midst of the seven candlesticks is "One like the Son of Man, dressed in a long robe, and with a gold sash wrapped around His chest. His head and hair were white like wool—white as snow, His eyes like a fiery flame, His feet like fine bronze fired in a furnace, and His voice like the sound of cascading waters. In His right hand He had seven stars; from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was shining like the sun at midday!" Revelation 1:13-16. Was it any marvel that when John saw Him—that he fell at His feet as dead?

Apart from the consideration of who it is that embodies in Himself this glory, such a sight could have but one effect upon man, and that is dread and repulsion. All that the beholder could say, is, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips—Woe is me, for I have seen the Lord in his glory!" But that gracious act of the Glorious One—His laying His right hand upon John, and saying, 'Fear not!'—His telling him who He was; not only that He was the First and the Last—but that He was the One who lives and was dead, and is now alive for evermore, brings him and us—who would contemplate this glory along with him, into a new position altogether. This sight is no longer one of repulsion—but of attraction. Jesus binds heaven and earth together—binds them for us in the only way in which they can be bound—in the bond of connection made by Himself—the One who has been on earth, who is in heaven. This glory, then, of Jesus, we must look at, not as repellent—but as attractive; not as that with which we have nothing to do, as being immeasurably beyond us—but as that with which we have the highest interest. For if Jesus is ours, is not this the beauty of our Christ? Have not we a connection with Him, which makes His glory to be dear to us, even as our sufferings are dear to Him?

Moreover, we can never look at Him without learning. All this book of Revelation is for teaching. "Blessed," it says in verse 3, "is he who reads," and that blessing belongs to him who considers the "feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace!"

We have already, it is to be hoped, learned something from considering the feet of the Lord on earth, and in the tomb, and as risen from that tomb. We cannot but hope for teaching from the consideration of them in heaven. As a mere abstract sight, the revelation which we have here of

Him is wonderful—but its value consists in its connection with ourselves.

First then, let us gather up some thoughts from the feet of Jesus being in glory at all. This picture is in all particulars, that of a man. A provision is here made for the manifestation of the unbroken humanity of the Lord—as a man He walked the earth, as such He is in heaven. He had walked among men, as a man, before His death; as a man He died and was buried; after resurrection He expressly asserted His manhood, pointing out that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as the disciples saw that He had—thus He ascended, and thus now is He seen by John in glory. The believer should admit in thought, no break in the manhood of his Lord. We should keep Jesus before us in that wondrous connection with us to which it pleased the Father that He should condescend; if we do not, we shall find two evils come upon us—one weakening for the present, and another, clouding for the future. The believer derives his present power from union with a Christ who walked an evil earth, sinlessly—from One who felt sorrow, and pain, and need—just as the believer does himself; and if that Christ has gone away to heaven, and has left His manhood, and manhood's feelings behind Him—where is the tried believer to look for that sympathy upon which it is so essential that he should lean? The natural tendency of the mind would be not to connect heavenly glory, and human nature together—to think that when earth is ended with, that which is human should be left behind; but God knows that we need human sympathies in our High Priest, and there they are in the man Christ Jesus, with full manhood in heaven. No man can be a strong believer, a strong sufferer—who does not gather his strength, be it with more or less of consciousness, from the presence of the man Christ Jesus in glory.

Moreover—if we know nothing of Christ in this light, the connection between the present and the future is far less real for us than it ought to be—than God has made it—we are making ourselves other than what God has done. Surely it is as such we expect to see Him, and to be with Him, and to think of Him evermore. No doubt there is a great difference between the aspect which Jesus presented to John in glory, and that which He did when the beloved apostle lay upon His breast—but the essential nature of the Lord was unchanged.

Yes! Christ's preserved manhood in glory tells us not to want to make ourselves other than what God has designed us to be. Some talk as though heaven were the getting rid of all that belongs to manhood and the like; they talk of so-and-so being an angel, and of glorified spirits; but did Jesus get rid of manhood? and what can we aim at higher than what He is? Not one among the angels will hereafter equal glorified man, of whom the head is the Son of God (both God and man) Himself. The interest which we have in heaven is not only on account of Godhead—but manhood. When our business lies in insisting on, arguing for, or unfolding one side of a truth—we are very apt to be taxed by unthinking people with denying its other side. So it may be well to guard ourselves against any misconception by stating the fullness of our belief in the essential Godhead of Jesus, and His oneness with the Father—very God of very God—begotten, not made. But that truth fully stated, our chief concern now, lies with the human side of His being—His human nature in glory.

We have a distinct interest in heaven, not only because of the presence of the Father there, and of the Son in His Godhead—but on account of the Son in His manhood.

Christ Himself develops this class of interest, by the particular manifestation which He here gives of Himself. Nothing is detracted from the glory of His Godhead—that remains as grand as ever; yet

how much is unfolded of His manhood! Does God will us to have an interest in heaven—in Christ as there now, on account of manhood? Yes—for man was very dear to Him. Our original redemption proved this—the whole bent of God’s mind towards us proved it; if we want to know how dear man was to God, we have only to look at His Son as a man in glory. The feet of Jesus as a man pierced and fixed to the cross, have a teaching for us on this head—as on earth; the feet of Jesus glorious like unto fine brass, have the same for us—as from heaven. This particular manifestation of our Lord shows us further, that it is the Father’s will that manhood should not be separated from His Son. They cannot be so separated forever. Jesus has taken upon Himself the human nature for eternity. The idea wrought out in death, resurrection, and ascension, was not to get rid of manhood—but to exalt it, as we see by this manifestation of it in glory.

God does not will us to deny our nature; He made us men, and He means us to continue men for ever; how great, then, our interest in humanity glorified in heaven!

Surely this ought to make heaven and glory more real to us; it ought to make our ideas and our hopes more definite than they are; it ought to make us more earnest in striving to be holy as men. Instead of connecting the future with being rid of the nature which God has given us, and in which it is His will that He shall be eternally praised and glorified—we shall desire Him to be glorified in it now, as much as can be on the earth, and we shall look forward to glorifying Him in it forever. This will animate us as men; this will make our daily human life real; this will keep us from those strange and dreamy notions which from their very undefinedness, help to weaken the influence which the next life should have on this.

It is true Paul desired to be delivered from the body of this death, and now we groan being burdened; but all that we would be rid of—are the sorrow, and pain, and burden, and decay, which belong to sin; human nature, and the human form glorified, await us hereafter! For observe next: This drawing near, this drawing in of manhood to God, is shown to us very clearly by Christ’s appearance as a man in glory. He is there as our representative head, and He would be no representative, if He had after ascension entered a phase of being altogether different from ours. Therefore we learn two things from this magnificent appearance of Christ—one is, that God wills to have man very close to Himself, and the other, that He will have him very exalted.

There was a terrible alienation from God—in the case of the first man, Adam—there is a glorious drawing in by the second man, Jesus Christ. And should not this dispel a whole multitude of fears and doubts—as to God’s good will concerning us? When we feel human nature in its weakness, and short coming, and decay—should we not look away from what we feel in ourselves, to what are the great intentions of God for us? Should we not see that whatever may be our weakness, it shall not countervail His strength? Shall not we, who are one with Christ by God’s own way of faith, behold Him passed through His sufferings to glory, and believe that we shall be brought triumphantly and safely through ours?

Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame; and when we think of the capacities of our human nature—of the drawing near of it to God by and by—let us bear with whatever may be our lot here. Let us refuse to be down-pressed beyond measure; let us spring at the thought of the possibilities which exist for the very nature in which we are suffering. And let us seek now, and here. It was in human nature that Jesus was holy—it was to Him as in human nature that Satan came and tempted Him—it was as man, that He hungered and thirsted,

and people sought to entangle Him in His talk; and now in that very victorious nature He is glorified in heaven. Surely it will be helpful to us, if we say, 'as a man, I am to be with God forever, therefore as a man will I seek after being holy now.'

We have already spoken of the power of contrast in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ; now this idea of contrast comes in again. There it was the contrast between suffering and ministration, between execrations and Hosannahs. Here it is the opposite; between glory and shame—rest and weariness—the light of burning brass, the dust-stain of travel.

We must fix our eyes again upon the manhood of the Son of God. This is the aspect of man in glory before God; contrasted—yet connected with His aspect on earth—the same man in both instances—the man Christ Jesus.

These are the very feet which were sorely weary, which were dust-stained, which were pierced, which needed and accepted human ministration; and now they are like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace. What a contrast to the Lord himself! The past—His past will never be effaced from His mind—no, not the smallest incident of it; and contrast will work by the law of its own nature, and will call up in Him all the thoughts which properly belong to it. And there is another who remembers all the past, that is—the Father. All things of Christ are remembered by Him. And why they were so, is remembered also. All the humiliation and suffering of the Son is connected with His oneness with the Father's mind—with His obedience—with His saying, 'I delight to do Your will,'—with His 'not my will—but Your be done,'—with His full entrance into the purposes of grace by which God was to be glorified in the salvation of man. When we think of that glory, and that it consists of redemption, is it any wonder that the Redeemer, should be found in glorified human nature in heaven?

We can well believe that this contrast will be recognized by the Father also. His rejoicing is in the Son—it is on the Son He looks with infinite delight—the Son's interests are His; and we can well believe that the Father rejoices in the contrast between the feet like unto fine brass glowing in a furnace, now that redemption is accomplished, and those feet weary and pierced while it was being wrought out. A contrast will be presented to the Father's eye throughout eternity by those who have been redeemed by the Son, and who are one with Him—who according to their capacity shine after His image in glory. But how different the contrast which they present and that which is shown by Jesus. He has come to His glory through sinless sorrow, and travail, and pain—they through that which was full of sin! Christ's robe was never stained, ours can only be white as washed in His blood. This, however, will not hinder God's glory in our contrast, nor our own joy. The death of Christ involved it, purchased it; we shall throughout eternity acknowledge it. We, who have been sinners, shall in our light reflect the glory of Him who died for our sin.

Let this prospect cheer us now. Let us look forward with great longing and assurance to that time when we also, no longer in sinful—but in glorified manhood, shall be with the One who now has the headship of humanity in glory. Yes! let such a light as this cheer us in our sorrow, make us content when we are in severe trials, enrich us in our seasons of poverty, and raise us when we are depressed. We are not always to have dusty and toil worn feet; we are not always to be amid the depressions and sin veils of a clouded humanity—there was joy set before Jesus, and in the power of it He endured His cross, and despised its shame—there is joy set before us, and let us try and do something in the power of it after the example of our Lord.

Oh, yes! often let us look upward, often onward—often away from the present gloom—to the future light; and the present unrest—to the future peace. It is partly for this purpose that the future is unveiled in any degree—it is meant to be an uplifting power in our present spiritual life. And there is no sphere so lowly—but that it may enter into it.

Poor toiling Christian men and women engaged in the lowest occupations may raise their eyes from the midst of them, and look at the glorified Savior, and at His feet shining like fine brass. He was revealed to John, not for himself alone, but for us—the eye of the apostle saw for the universal church. Let us distinctly refuse to allow any earthly occupation, if a lawful one, to degrade us by pinning us down to the dust amid which we must walk and work. This is an animating sight, and introduced into the common affairs of daily life may enable us to do our work in them amid the shining of heaven's own light.

Let us next note the fullness of this revelation—it shows us Christ from head to foot—from the head and the hairs white like wool, as white as snow, down to these feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace.

This, then, is the manifestation in glory of a whole Christ. It might seem at first sight that we should not need any exhortation, to avail ourselves of the privilege of contemplating a whole and full Christ. But in truth we do.

We are so one-sided, so narrow-minded, and so apt to fix upon parts of a truth, without their relation to the whole—that we are apt to violate or to miss the harmonies of truth—that we need to be reminded that even of Jesus, a part is not the whole; and that no one part of His character or beauty was intended to satisfy our souls.

Many of our mistakes in the Christian life come from partial views of Christ, from missing the harmony, symmetry, and perfect proportion of His character. That mistake never can be made in glory.

Here you find one Christian fixing on Christ's humility, another on His zeal, another on His holiness, another on His unworldliness, and so on—and perhaps bending all their energies to attain that particular grace by which they have been so much struck. But while doing so, the other beauties of Jesus are unperceived, unsought, and unattained.

Now, here is Christ with God in heaven—and we see how He is with His Father, and how He is viewed by Him, namely, in harmonious entirety. In Daniel's image the head was resplendent of fine gold—but the body passed through a series of deteriorations, until at length the feet were only a mixture of iron and clay. Here, where all human might was combined, and the image presented was that of earthly dominion and beauty at its best, gradual failure is what we see—the perfection of the head was not sustained—the feet were not perfect even after their kind; with the iron was a mingling of clay. The deterioration is a leading characteristic of all earthly excellence. We find it in ourselves—whatever we may have attained to, there is always a tendency to deteriorate. But the man Christ Jesus was above and deterioration or failure. His life was in its fullness, that "path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day." The head was glorious, and the feet too—there was perfection in carrying out thought into action—harmony between the thoughts of the head, and the actings of the hands, and the walkings of the feet. And let this thought weigh with us now; it is full both of comfort and instruction—of comfort, because we see we have to do

with a Christ who does not content Himself with simply good intentions. He thought much of His disciples on earth, and then said, "I go to prepare a place for you!" With Him action was the natural consequence of thought. And so, we have not to do with a Christ of mere intentions. We shall find His doings equal to His thinkings. And if we do so here, where we must live amid cloudings and drawbacks of many kinds, and where the actings of Christ are to a great extent His helping us amid hindrances, how much more shall it be the case in that land where hindrances are done with forever! Then we shall see what it is to have an acting Christ—one whose thoughts and deeds go together—one who proves that He loves not in word only—but in deed and in truth. And from this contemplation of the Lord, it will be instructive to look for a moment to ourselves. May we have grace given to us to be harmonious from head to foot in our Christian life—neither to think without acting, nor to act without thought. Let us not content ourselves with good thoughts without good deeds—the head without the feet. We have often failed in this respect, and so come short of the glory of God; let us look on Christ, let us think of what He will make even these feet of ours by and by, and let us be up, and in our daily walk glorify Him with them now! The thought also comes into our minds—how should we serve a Being thus all holy, all bright—the very feet like fine brass, glowing in a furnace. Let us look at that head, and glance downward to those feet—and then think nothing small, nothing to be neglected in our walk and life. Let us try with all holiness to serve—to copy—to be so far as we can worthy of a Being all holy. One writes this with shame—for what have we been in the past? what are we now? yes, what can we ever hope to be while in the flesh? But we must not withhold on this account; we must set the pattern before us—and try to become as like it as we can. The head and the feet are both glorious in light, and so the eye cannot fix upon any part in which there is imperfection or short-coming in the glory of the Lord—any part in which there can be the least sympathy with evil; but we need not be discouraged on that account. Though He has no sympathy with sin, He has with the poor sinner—He knows our frame, He is experienced of our temptations, He is well aware that we are open to attack from head to foot, and that we are weak all over, and that our feet are set in slippery places. And He who has feet like unto fine brass glowing in a furnace—will hold up our feet as they travel Zionwards, until at last He sets them down upon the land where there are none to hurt or destroy, and where there is the rest which now "remains for the people of God."

Another blessed thought suggested to us by this mention of Christ from head to foot in glory is this. The saints shall see, and shall rejoice in a whole Christ in heaven.

Such a view we have not now. We seem unable to take in much about the Lord at once. And in consequence our joy is not full. Our view may be great in one contemplation and another of the Lord—but it is not full. In heaven we shall rejoice in everything belonging to Christ. All His character will be presented to us in its variety of beauty; and if we know what it is to feel joy at the realization of any one of His manifestations of Himself here, how much more shall we feel it when He dwells with us in full gracious manifestation of Himself there.

Then shall His people know how wholly He was theirs in the past; they shall do so, by feeling how wholly He is theirs now. Yes! that is the way we shall read our past—all was His patience, and tenderness, and righteous and loving dealing with us. We shall know much of our own histories then, and they will be full of Christ. We shall wonder then at the greatness of the gift of God in giving us a whole Christ, and that, when we were in a world and a body of sin.

We cannot enjoy a whole Christ as we are now circumstanced, because the flesh is ever pulling us down to a low standard, and entering into conflict with this and that which was glorious in Jesus; but then all these impediments are removed, the head, the feet, the hands, all are ours, even as all of us is His! And that will satisfy the longings of our intensest love. Intense absorbing love, does not willingly lose anything of the one that is loved; it craves the ministry of the head, and hand, and foot; of thought, and deed. We could no more do without the feet of Jesus in glory, than we could without His head; without the instruments and symbols of His long travel, than that of His loving thought on our behalf. If so, we would say, "Where are the feet which were weary, which were pierced, which accepted the sacrifice of a woman's love, at which the afflicted were cast and made whole?" We shall not have so great a loss—as this missing of the feet of Christ. The Father has given Him unto us a whole Christ; as a whole Christ He offered Himself on Calvary; as a whole Christ He is our representative and sacrifice now, saying on our behalf, "They pierced my hands and my feet;" and less than a whole Christ we could not do with in heaven. The feet of Jesus may well be taken to represent all that was most humble and lowly. The unloosing of the shoe latchet—the covering of the foot was the humblest task which John the Baptist could represent himself as doing for Jesus. And when the Lord Himself would stoop to the humblest and lowest act of service, and teach His disciples to do the same—the washing of feet was the one He chose. That His own feet should now be thus gloriously exalted in heaven is not without some teaching for us in this direction. We find, then, that which was most lowly on earth—is exalted in heaven, and that with intensity of brightness. The feet are sharers with the head, they occupy a position of association. No doubt Jesus during His earthly walk saw all humble and lowly deeds in both their true present and future dignity. He knew how and why it was that He who would be greatest—must be the servant of all. He connected service and reward together. And in His mind all lowly deeds associated themselves with high thoughts; they were invested with a dignity with which His knowledge of the mind of the Father enabled Him to clothe them. And it is just here that we fail. We have little power of association. We isolate things and deeds—from principles and thoughts, and then our services become burdensome, and our duties become toil—and failure is too often the result.

Jesus never did a humble deed, or took up a menial position, or uttered a lowly speech, without a consciousness of the true nobility attached to them. By the very fact of their lowliness they had other world connections; they linked themselves with the head and the hair white like wool, with the girding of the golden belt, with the eyes as a flame of fire, and the feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace. With what joy, with what power did Jesus perform all His humble deeds under these conditions! He was always dealing with what had been kindred to glory—association with heaven—oneness with His Father—connection with His own future high position.

Let us try to bring all lowliness into association. Let us try and see the capacities of expansion which exist in lowly deeds. They are like little seeds which can produce something very unlike themselves; let us think not only what they appear on earth—but what they really are in heaven; yes, and what they will be by and by, when the full time for development shall have come. No one can get a right idea of a thing by looking only at a part of it; we certainly do not get a right idea of the blessedness of lowly deeds, thoughts, or ways, by going no farther than this life.

Let us bind heaven and all of heaven to our humble duties and walks on earth; let us look at our Great Head and see the glory which is now His; let us believe that in our measure and according

to our capacity so shall it be with us.

What could be more humble than a little child—but He presented such in a position of dignity, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven! in its bright eternal meaning let it touch and gild all the service of earth—let the light from the feet of brass shine upon us, as well as that from the eyes which are as a flame of fire. Let us remember that our now all-glorious Redeemer, His earthly service now ended, once said, "I am among you as the One who serves." Luke 22:27

Let us realize the nobility of our lowly service, of our humble places, and positions, and opportunities at once. We have only to take the nobility which God has already attached to them, and it is done. Let us not call anything common—if it be the way in which we are to serve God. Let us be afraid of no soiling—except that of sin. Mud and dust there are in plenty here; and few steps can we take without encountering and perhaps being troubled with the one or the other; but that is the very service out of which will come the brightness of the future, and the rest of the people of God.

Life, and common every day service and duties—will wear a new aspect to us—when we see them tending to such a glorious consummation! And we shall have fresh heart and energy for our humble gospel labors. We shall be more content with humble things, and more willing to bear the mis-judgings of the world; and we shall take up many a sphere which otherwise would have been left unfilled. The future will compensate abundantly for the present humble services—for the joy which is set before us. The lowly ministries and ministers of God—we shall exalt and not despise; and we shall see in many a washer of feet one who himself shall hereafter stand with glorious feet in heaven.

Thus much, then, from the bare fact of having a mention made of the feet of Jesus in heaven—that which is lowliest of man in the very abode of God. May those feet which went about doing good during His sojourn on earth, still minister to us from the height of glory—so that abiding in Him, we may walk even as He walked, and at last be with Him where He is. The head and the feet are both glorious in light. And so we see the impossibility of fixing on any imperfect part in Christ which can sympathize with evil. This is one of the great differences between Him and the holiest people on earth. The purest and the best here have some sympathies, however small, with evil. None of them can say as Jesus did, 'the prince of this world comes—and has nothing in me.' We may not be aware ourselves that this sin and shortcoming, or excess whatever it may be in which the sin consists, comes not merely from a temptation—but from our inward sympathy with evil; but were it not for that measure of sympathy with evil, the temptation could do nothing. But Jesus was triumphant, sin found no sympathy in Him. Neither in the thought of the head, nor the affection of the heart, nor the way of the feet, did it find seed-ground on which it could sprout.

There are two thoughts in connection with this which concern us much. One is, we must take a whole Christ; the other, we must submit the whole of our self to Christ.

Many men have part Christs. What they have is true as far as it goes; but it is only a whole Christ that can save us, or that can lift up our moral natures. Therefore let us dwell in our minds on all of Jesus; let us think of what He was, and what He felt, and what He did, and how He did it; and what He would not do, and how and why He left it undone—of Jesus in this relationship, and that,

everything that we can learn about Him, in every way. He exists as 'the man' Christ Jesus. He is in glory as the man Christ Jesus, not only for Himself—but for us; the soul that has any adequate conception of what Jesus is, knows as the bride says in Canticles, that He is altogether lovely, and therefore altogether to be desired.

Moreover, we must desire—nay, if we think thus of Christ, we cannot help thus willing that He should take the whole of us. Our desire will be the whole of Him for us, and the whole of us for Him. We could not so to speak, take a whole Christ to ourselves, unless our whole selves were given to Him. No doubt many of our spiritual sorrows, and some of the fretfulness of our spiritual life, come from the not submitting (not perhaps designedly) of some part of our whole self to Christ. We hold on to that to which is unsavory, and unsanctified, and troubles the fineness of our spiritual sense, and disturbs the balance of a perfectly healthy spiritual constitution. The sanctification of the whole body and soul is accomplished by the fitting to us a whole Christ—it is in a whole Christ that we shall be presented without spot or blemish or any such thing.

There are, it may be quite unconsciously on our part, some withholdings, be they more or less, in all of us, from Christ; something to which we do not want Him to submit to Him. Out of these withholdings come weakness, and sin, and sorrow. And so it will be well for us often to speak to Christ on this matter—to say, 'O my Savior take me altogether. I want to be wholly yours. You have purchased me altogether; You gave Your whole self for my whole self, therefore it is all Yours, and as Yours take it.' This will be fully after God's mind, for His way of raising us is not by contenting Himself with only a part of us—but by bringing our total self into connection with One who is perfect.

We often seek to attain our end by lowering the standard to accommodate our self; God never lowers His standard but He gives strength whereby that standard may be reached. And here the ideal which God puts before us is a real one also. It has the immense advantage of being the reality; not the dream of a poet, or the abstruse figure of the painter—but a life of fact.

We are not then to lose ourselves in any of our contemplations of our Lord, His life, His death, His present life in glory—His whole self is to be a living reality to us. The present life in glory is ours, just as much as was the life of suffering, and the death of shame. Let us look upon the feet burning like fine brass in the light of as solid a reality for us, as those same feet when sitting wearily at Sychar, or hanging pierced on Calvary.

We do not rejoice as we ought at the perfection of Christ's holiness, we do not admire it as we should, namely, with a consciousness of self-interest therein. The thought of His holiness ought not to affright us; what He has He gives to us; it should be a source of gladness. I admire it in Him, and He says, 'What is mine—I give to you.'

All that He has in manhood, He has for His people—therefore the light and glory of His feet—of His holy ways, of His completeness is mine. That head, and those eyes, are wonderful—but not more so to me, nor are they of deeper concern to me than these "feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace."

01.16. Chapter 16.The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Manifested Power

Chapter 16.The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Manifested Power "His feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace." Revelation 1:15

There never was a greater mistake made with regard to our blessed Lord, whether considered in his life of humiliation on earth, or of glory in heaven—than to think of him as One whose loving-kindness had anything in it akin to weakness. The perfection and balance of His character forbade that.

We ourselves seldom possess a specific virtue in any striking degree, without its filching from something else; very often it is not anything positive in itself—but rather a negation of something else. And judging of Christ after our own imperfect standard, we not infrequently exalt some one of His perfections, at the expense of another.

Now here Jesus is represented as One standing in great strength. His feet are like unto fine brass. There is no yielding, no element of weakness here—nothing for mere maudlin sentiment to indulge in. And this strength had a twofold relation—one to us and one to Satan; and towards each it is put forth. And first as regards ourselves. Now when we think of Christ, it is generally only in our relation to sin—namely, as our Savior from sin's curse. It is to be feared that many of us think little comparatively of His being to us a Savior from its power. Even of His sufferings in our behalf, how much more we think of the physical than of the mental part. We are melted at the thought of the buffetings, and spittings, and scorn, of the blood flowing from the wounds; we smite our breasts and say, 'Woe is me—that I was the cause of all this!' We think little of the mental anguish—of the meaning of 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?'—of the loading down of the guilt of my sin on Him who was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, on Him who shrank in horror from even its slightest stain.

It is indeed well that our ideas of Christ's strength should associate themselves with immense power to love, immense to save, immense to help—but all is inharmonious, incomplete, unless we see that strength in His manifested holiness also. The way to slay sin in our daily life—is to live day by day with a holy Savior—to feel that our closest contact is with one who cannot bear sin—to realize that we are living in the presence of One, whose ordinary manifestation of Himself is one of strength in holiness.

Effort in the spiritual life is good—but it is doubtful whether we do not in some degree take wrong views about it. We think more of holiness by effort—than holiness by habit. The latter is what is presented to us in the feet burning like fine brass. There Christ stands in the calmness of strength and light; and He would have the power and glory of His position operate on us.

We shall never know the power of Jesus—if we look only at His cross, and forbear the looking at Himself. His cross was only of avail because of what He was. If we have accepted it, we may pass beyond its violence into the calm of His present life, and draw strength for our spiritual life, not only from Christ's death for sin—but from His life in holiness; each day may be spent in the presence of

the calm, brilliant power of the Holy One—"the feet like unto fine brass" being practically put with heavy tread on our rising sin—the manifested holiness of Jesus acting on us and for us with great strength.

We must conquer sin, not only by negative—but by positive means—not only by our view of Christ's death—but of His life. God meant us to go on from the cross when it had done its work, to live with a living Christ—yes, we are privileged not only laboriously to find out how holy He was in this and that acting in life—but to look at Him as now fully revealed in the holy place itself. This sight will do wonders for us in our seekings after a holy life. We shall have all the power which belongs to companionship with the living—all the mighty influence which belongs to example—all that appertains to a presence. We shall take heed to our ways when we think of the feet like unto fine brass—to where we set our feet, when we think of His feet. And when sin rises up like a winding snake, and, perhaps before we know anything about it, has risen so high that we cannot put our foot upon it, then are we not without help—then let us call to mind the feet of brass—their exaltation, their vantage ground, their strength, their purity; and they shall crush the head of the monster we dread, and we shall escape!

Let us in imagination, lay the filthy thing beside the feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace—and many a dark temptation, when thus exposed by that light, shall perish by the development of its own vileness; but if it should still put forth its strength, we may invoke the power of the feet to crush it—and they will.

Let us not be afraid of the holiness of these feet—or think that we do them wrong by asking that they may come into contact with, and stamp upon our sin. His feet—even as His hands, and head, and all points of His humanity—are for us; there is nothing in the human form, or human mind, or exalted human position of Jesus, which does not fit into something human belonging to us. We may look at all and each, and say, 'What is this, and this, and this—to me?' On Satan especially will this power be brought to bear. Antichrist is to be destroyed with the brightness of the coming of the Lord. And as to Satan himself, he was doomed from the beginning to be destroyed by the crushing of these feet. On those feet was the bruised heel—and it was the bruised heel that was to be crusher or bruiser of the serpent's head. There was to be a place of brightness—but it was first to be a place of suffering.

And, in truth, it was thus with Jesus, as it was to be with His church. It is through sorrow, that we pass to joy; we pass through gloom to light. Our places of suffering shall be places of brightness. There is something very teaching and comforting in the bruising of the heel, and the brightness of the foot. Let us make use of it.

Let us connect the very seat of trial with thoughts of joy; His head and those hairs are white like wool, as white as snow; and elsewhere we read that on that head were many crowns. The voice that cries, 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?' is now as the sound of many waters—the pierced right hand has in it many stars—the visage marred more than that of any of the sons of men, is as the sun shining in its strength; the body first clothed with a mocking purple robe, and then stripped for crucifixion, is clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the chest with a golden belt. For our weary foot or hand, for our pierced heart, for our aching head—there is an opposite of blessedness and joy for every grief they have respectively endured. But we are now to speak of the power brought to bear on Satan. It will indeed be a crushing one.

The brightness of Jesus is not manifested now in this world of shadow and gloom. Gleams of it are seen here and there—but the day of full manifestation has not yet come. But when Jesus shall be revealed, Satan shall be struck down. That evil spirit has come into conflict with power many times, and with power in many forms—but it was always that with the element of human weakness and sin somewhere in it. But when he stands face to face with perfect holiness—it will smite him. He fled from it after the encounter in the wilderness, when Jesus was weak from fasting; how much more will he have to flee when there shall be no reason why Jesus should veil His power in any way—when the time for crushing shall have come. This will be the triumph of holiness. The light will drive the prince of darkness back into his own abyss. Not only will he not come to the light because his deeds are evil—but he will flee from it, he will be driven before it. Great are the powers of light in nature, and equally great, yes, greater, in grace; the coming of the One with the feet like unto fine brass glowing in a furnace, will be the full sun-rising of which we now have only feeble dawnings here and there.

Let us take courage, then, however great may be the present power of Satan either in the world, or in our own hearts. Let us have all the confidence inspired by the knowledge that we are on the winning side. Let us feel that we are contending with a doomed enemy. Let us hail every glimpse of the dawn of the brightness which shall destroy not only the devil's antichrist—but the devil himself; and let us look forward to the full manifestation of the Sun of Righteousness Himself. It is only by His coming that the night-clouds will be dispelled, and the nations of the earth shall walk in light. But we need not wait for a long-distant future before we can receive light ourselves. We, too, must look to the future for full revelation—but Jesus may be brightening to us every day. And thus our evil shall be consumed. Let us say, 'O my Savior, be so bright in my soul that evil shall not be able to live in Your presence—come with light, ever more light, that the evil may appear dark—thus shall Satan be crushed in us, meeting in every believer a foretaste of his final and perfect doom.'

These feet of Jesus are thus shining in the way of final development. Christ always knew where and to what He was going; the future always had its power with Him. He looked to the end—He remembered the joy which was set before Him. His Father did not expect Him to go through the world, and His mission in it, without having light before Him. He also had respect unto the recompense of reward.

We may remember that we do not serve God for nothing, and that remembrance may exercise its influence on our life. It is God's plan always to set something before us—that we should be people of hope, and reach forth to the object of our hope.

None who looked upon the way-worn feet of Jesus could have known that, wrapped up in those travelings, and wearinesses, and nail-piercings, was the brightness. They were as unlike it as the hard bud is unlike the unfolded flower, gorgeous in color, and sweet in its scent. But they were the germs which were to develop. Only they must develop in the proper time and way. Christ could not hurry the development of His own life into its eventual glory. Its bud, like all other buds, must unfold, it must not be picked to pieces. And so He passed through all His trials—He spent long years before He came out into ministry at all; He rejected the premature glory of sovereignty which men would have thrust upon Him; He did not judge the world, for His time of judgment had not yet come. To many, the present might have seemed to be thrown away, to be all lost time; nothing to

all human appearance was coming of it; but the future was maturing—that future of which in this passage we have a glimpse. The present always has its use; it is never lost, never being thrown away, unless we will have it to be so. Let us look at it in this light—ever saying, 'This, and this, and this is an unfolding.'

Alas! what a fearful unfolding lies before many—to what a final development are they going! They will be landed by a natural process, in a terrible future! And now a word or two upon Christ's ability to bring light with Him. He has light in Himself, and light for us.

Jesus walked in light Himself while He was upon the earth, though men did not see that such was His path—His was that path of the just, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." But what could not be revealed on earth, is revealed in heaven—we are allowed to see what the feet and path of Jesus really are. In all Christ's comings to us now, in all His ways with us, in all His leadings into duties—He comes with feet all light and bright. The duties and dispensations may seem dark—but if He is with us, His feet will bring light into them. The light will come in its own time. Jesus does not change dispensations—sorrow remains sorrow; but He comes with his own light into them, and then the sorrow remains a sorrow, and yet is turned into joy.

Let us believe, then, in Christ's ability to bring light into all darkness. Let us seek to see the feet—and all will be well; let our anxiety be, not lest we should fall into any trouble; but lest if we do, Jesus should not be in it.

There lies before me a place of shadows—the valley of the shadow of death. That valley I cannot enter without Christ. But with Him, even of that place I may say, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." The feet of light are what I hope for there—the feet light, and the footfalls on before me light also—so that I need not be afraid. I shall know that they are the once-pierced feet, and, therefore, they are mine—they are the feet which lay in the grave, and are now all glorious, and all for me, coupling the darkness of the tomb with the radiance which lies beyond.

01.17. Chapter 17 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Strength

Chapter 17 The Feet of Jesus—the Place of Strength

"When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man! He laid His right hand on me, and said, Do not be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hell." Revelation 1:17-18

We commenced this volume with the consideration of 'many' at the feet of Jesus, we now conclude it with the consideration of 'one'. The 'many' were all sorts and conditions of men, who in mind and body were afflicted; the 'one' is the beloved apostle—he who lay in the bosom of his Lord, and who now was in exile for His sake.

We are glad that it should be so—that whether through 'many' or 'one' it should be the same story—all mercy—all love. His cradle was love, His cross was love, His living was love, His death was love—it was all love when he was in this world. And what is more fit, than that we should be presented with a picture of love when the eternal world is unveiled to us also. The apostle hearing suddenly behind him the voice of a great trumpet, and seeing the glory of this wonderful Being, is overwhelmed by both sound and sight. He was simply and purely in the flesh; and as such could not stand up in presence of this majesty and overwhelming glory.

Though it was his beloved Lord—yet it was that Lord in glory; and that glory produced its natural result—the apostle fell at the feet of Christ.

There was no opportunity of reasoning, or of self reassurance; the amazing brilliancy and majesty of the Being before him, precluded that; the apostle fell at His feet like a dead man! Not even at the feet, could he have recovered strength if left to himself—for, as we have just seen, they were flashing with light and glory. They could not be held or embraced as in the times of Christ's flesh, or even of that body, of whatever nature it was, in which he lived for awhile on earth between the resurrection and ascension. And now, even they, though the feet of Jesus, with their furnace-like glory—were enough to scorch the stoutest heart!

Under these, as under all circumstances of difficulty and distress—the relief comes from Christ Himself; and from Christ, by the manifestation of Himself. He speaks to the beloved apostle, reassures and comforts him by touch and word, saying, "Do not be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hell."

Let us place in the following order the few thoughts which the nature and design of this volume suggest on this the last appearance in scripture of the feet of Jesus.

- I. The apostle fallen as dead at the feet.
- II. The apostle not allowed to remain as dead.
- III. How the apostle was aroused from that death state—and comforted.

I. The position of John at the feet of his glorified Lord, is that of one as dead. Let us keep clearly before our minds that John, though the beloved apostle, was still simply a poor mortal in flesh and blood; and as such, had no inherent power to stand up beneath any spiritual manifestation, much less under such an overwhelming blaze of glory as that which he now saw. No doubt there will be abundant strength for sustaining such manifestations hereafter—but not now, unless there is special strengthening. John was conscious that he was flesh and blood, with all its sinfulness; and his acting was exactly conformable to the circumstances in which he found himself. When Paul had that wonderful vision, and heard sounds which it was not lawful for a man to utter, he had some suitability of nature given to him at the time, and for the time; for whether he was in the body or out of the body he could not tell. But John knew well enough that he was in the body, and that without any preparation of any kind he had seen the Lord in His glory.

Such were the natural effects of a vision of the Lord in His glory. We may pause for a moment to ask what will be its effect on the wicked, when the days of mercy are ended, and the only revelation of Jesus will be for judgment? It is a fearful thought. He will be able to destroy them, with the brightness of His appearing. When every eye shall see Him, and those also who pierced Him; what will be their sensations, when they look upon His body, as that which they bruised, pierced, insulted, scoffed, spat upon, and despised. For all such fearful deeds are laid to the account of the rejectors of the Lord; and now must they reckon concerning them with Him, as in His glorious body. And touching His body of glory—and our sin—the more special, the more glorious the manifestation of Christ to us; the more must it ever, from its very nature, waken in us a consciousness of our inability in ourselves—to stand before Him. We are ever panting after knowing more and more of Christ; and what, if some manifestation like this be sent to us—if, instead of seeing Him by the well-side weary, or with feet being anointed, or pierced, or manifesting themselves in witnessing love, as to the disciples—we are called upon to behold them burning like brass; and even then, only as parts of a great perfection of glory!

We cannot see anything of His glory and purity without being smitten with a consciousness of our sin—we must fall before Him.

We may well tremble at our being only in the flesh; and if left to ourselves might wish never to have any vision of Christ here, beyond what we believe flesh to be capable of bearing. But Jesus gives revelations from time to time, which the merely human body never could bear—which it never was constructed to bear; and for all such revelations, He will always give something which is beyond what is merely human in the way of strength. As is your day—so shall your strength be; as is your sorrow, as is the immense revelation of the divine majesty and your demerit, the one infinitely high, the other infinitely low—so shall be your strengthening and upholding from the Lord. The practical point which I wish to impress upon the reader is this: beloved as he may be of the Lord, yes, let me say of his Lord—there may come that upon him in his spiritual life, which as a manifestation of his Lord's glory, yes, even of his Lord's love, may be altogether too much for him.

It may be that, the reader's experiences in Christian life have partaken more of the character of gloom than brightness; and that what he fears for the time to come is overwhelming from that source. Well, the same observation, holds good for him. This dead and overwhelmed state is not one in which it is the mind of Christ that any man should remain. Saul of Tarsus fallen to the ground—must not remain there. It may be necessary that we should fall to the ground, as the very

physical frame will faint; but falling to the ground and staying there are two very different things. This is taught us in the fact that—

II. The apostle was not allowed to remain as one dead. And so our minds are at once brought back to Jesus again. It is the same Jesus on earth—and in glory, showing kindness to those who by any means are brought to His feet.

"By any means"—and so there is great security—security in the immense diversity of experiences of the people of God—of all; from the poor creature who, falling there, says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," up to a beloved apostle, or any disciple, overwhelmed with the majesty of the One he loves. Can we imagine any two people under more different circumstances than Saul of Tarsus—and John of Patmos? The one caught red-handed in murder, falls to the ground; and the other, in suffering for the very Lord who appeared, falls likewise. Of neither is it the will of the Holy One, that he should lie prostrate; to the trembling and astonished Saul the Lord says 'arise!' and on John lying at His feet like one dead, He lays His hand and says, 'Do not be afraid!'

Diverse indeed are the acquaintanceships with the feet, and made in diverse ways. Everyone has its place; and all together they form a great ministry for the Church, for they help to give a more perfect image of Christ. And now this—the last one with which we are presented in the Scripture—comes in very beautifully. For though of necessity it shows Christ, the One whom we have known, admired, and loved so long in suffering—as brilliant beyond all the power of human sight to bear, still it shows us man lifted up so as to bear it; the very One who Overcame by His glory, giving the strength by which the vision of that glory could be borne.

It shows us more than this—even the man thus cast down raised up, for lengthened communion with the glorified One. We shall be lifted up to sustain the sight of the glorified One, and to hold communion with Him. We cannot imagine a manifestation of glory being pushed farther than this, or a mortal's being in more need of support; the support is given—a witness to us that even poor disciples shall never be allowed to be overborne, no not even by the glory and majesty of their Lord. The position of the apostle was as that of one dead. It was not the mere fact that he saw a vision of the world of glory, which overwhelmed him. No doubt, at all times such visions have been too much for flesh and blood. Ezekiel, Daniel, Job—all were overcome by such sights; but here it was just the immensity and intensity of the glory which were too much for John.

Perhaps it was needful for our instruction that he should have thus fallen; that the nothingness of the flesh in itself, its lack of power even in the most favored should be proved; that we should learn that when there is about to be most filling, there shall be most emptying first. "Who is sufficient for these things?" was the teaching which John received before the wonderful visions were unfolded before his eyes. And now that the apostle lies prostrate at the feet, shining like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace; we ask, 'of what use would it have been to Christ, to the Church, to himself—had he been allowed to remain prostrate?' That falling had its place, but the apostle rose from the feet of Jesus a deeply self-emptied man, to receive for His Church the fullness of the things He was about to reveal. No man is intended to occupy a position in the Church which makes him useless. Continued paralysis from fear would be no glory to Christ, no good to man. Every dispensation which comes upon us is not for ourselves alone; the union of the members of the body makes the experience of one to be at least the teaching of all.

So, then—

III. Jesus quickly lays His right hand upon the Apostle. The apostle is raised, not by any coming to of himself, not by any acquired familiarity with the sight which at first overwhelmed him—but by a special and personal act of Christ. When we are so devastated, that we cannot reason, being perhaps so overwhelmed as not to be able to say, 'this is my own Lord, therefore He cannot hurt me, He can only do me good;' then we may be sure the Lord Himself will act for us. We may safely leave ourselves in all prospective trials, be they of light or darkness, in His hands. Thus we shall get rid of the depressions of weakness—of all fears of the failing of mental powers, yes, even of faith itself. We may come to such a state that sustaining faith will leave us; perhaps intense bodily weakness, perhaps heavy cloudings of Satan will cause this, then we shall be little better than one dead; but the life and the light are in Jesus, and life will act, and light will shine. The right hand conferring fresh life will be laid on us by the One at whose feet we have fallen as dead.

John, then, being utterly self-emptied, and made even like a dead man, is vivified for great and important service. It was with him as with Saul, as with almost if not indeed actually with all—in proportion as God was about to fill him with the revelation of His own things, did He self-empty him—for what self-emptying could go further than the apparent loss of life itself? But in this, so thoroughly accomplished, no time is lost; the spell is quickly removed, the right hand is laid upon the Apostle, the word of strength is spoken. Jesus says, "Do not be afraid"—then He proceeds to say who He is, and what He will have the Apostle do. "Write," He says to him. It is the Lord's will, not only that the Apostle should live—but that he should do so with comfort and in peace; with an unbroken sense of union with his Lord; with a high capacity for service.

It is indeed no poor slavish life that Christ wills us to lead in presence of His glory. We think too much of the overwhelms of majesty—we think it the humblest and safest position—is to lie as dead. But Jesus wills us life, and peace, and usefulness—yes, honor—He lifts us from our own depressions to set us in the liberty of His own high service.

Remember that, dear reader. The enlarging of the heart and the running in the way of the commandments go together. In what sense, then, ask yourselves, are you now engaged—what emptyings have you had—what fillings? Do you know the mind of Christ concerning you, that it is, that fear should vanish, that you should be partakers of the strength of His right hand? "Now I know," said David in Psalms 20, "that the Lord saves His anointed, he will hear Him from His holy heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand." That right hand's saving strength is ours—oh, that we may be ever saying with the Psalmist, "Now I know! Now I know!" And what a glimpse does this give us of the glory of future service. John was shown here his connection with the glorious One—and was given commission to write for Him—and all that he did was as for the One who had been dead—but was now in light and life. So shall it be hereafter. We shall serve in conscious connection with the glorious One. Here, when we serve Jesus, our service is often undervalued. No one sees Him; the honor of the Master is unknown, and, by consequence, little comes to the servant; and we ourselves are so absorbed in the actual working, or, perhaps, so cast down by the unpleasant surroundings of the work, that, we are but little elevated by the consciousness of the glory of connection with the Lord. But by and by, all service—its honor, and dignity, glory, and its immediate connection with the Lord—will be seen and felt.

Meanwhile, let us seek, each of us after our opportunities and according to our commission, to serve. Let us see that Christ wills to be glorified by our life, and not by our death—by our freedom, and not by our fear. The Son sets us free, oh! may we feel that we are free indeed. However it may have been with us in time past, may we henceforth be privileged to look upon our glorified Lord with the consciousness of being in union with Him, and of being partakers of His strength. But should we be overwhelmed by the greatness of the evil in ourselves, or of the glory in Him, or of both combined—then will He surely deal with us in like grace to that with which He dealt with John—who "fell at his feet as dead."

Thus, dear reader, we have traveled together through some of the scenes in which we find the Feet of Jesus, and gathered up some thoughts of teaching therefrom; leaving, I doubt not, far more behind than we have borne away!

S. Divine guidance

Divine guidance Philip Bennett Power

"Guide me in Your truth and teach me!" Psalms 25:5 "Teach me Your way, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth." Psalms 86:11 The men of the world are steeped in ignorance as regards all things belonging to God, and the spiritual life. The world lies in darkness; it loves darkness; it cannot comprehend any other conditions, but that of darkness; and it will not come to the light because its deeds are evil. Nor was the condition of the world changed by the coming of our Lord; it rolls on in darkness now, just as it did when He was upon the earth. And so it will continue to roll on—until He appears again in light and glory, when the light shall overcome the darkness, and that, when it is thicker and denser than ever it was before.

It is true, we have daily displayed before us the increasing knowledge of man—but knowledge is one thing, and true wisdom is another, and the world by its wisdom knows not God. With all man's increase in knowledge, it is really astounding how little he has increased in practical wisdom. The pages of history seem to have taught him but little; the experiences of others seem to be thrown away on him. In kingdoms, societies, and the individual circles of men's daily life—we see the same old faults and follies renewed again and again. If we strip these of the adventitious circumstances connected with them, we shall find how little variety there is in sin. If the people of the world continue thus ignorant in those things which come so easily within their comprehension, which come so frequently under their observation, and in which their own visible interests are concerned—is it any wonder that they are ignorant of the things of God, of His ways, of His laws, of His mind, of the fact that God sees not as man sees, that His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts? The wonder is, not that we were ignorant—but that we were ever made wise; and the wonder is dispelled, only by our seeing that this was done by the immediate working of the Spirit.

There is no point on which the world is more dark—than that of its own ignorance. We might truly say, "it is ignorant of its ignorance" —it knows enough when it learns by rote a few first principles of religion; it comforts itself that it is not atheistic because it believes that there is a God; but as to knowing His ways, laws, mind, or any such things—with them it has nothing at all to do. The people of the world do not care for enlightenment; they feel no pressing need for it; in all probability they have an instinctive feeling that if enlightened they would know a little more than they wish to know; that their newly acquired knowledge would interfere with their old habits and ways, and this is one reason why all spiritual teaching which goes beneath the surface, is distasteful to the majority of men. They cannot bear to be brought into contact with God, in anything but a general way; the particulars of His character do not agree—with the particulars of their lives! "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." John 3:19

It is the fashion in the present day to talk of man's enlightenment, and to represent human nature as upheaving under its load, as straining towards a knowledge of truth. Such is not in reality the

case, and wherever there is an effort in the mind untaught of the Spirit, it is directed towards God as the great moral Being, and not as the great spiritual Being. A man untaught of the Holy Spirit may long to know a moral God—but he never can desire to know a spiritual Being.

Dear reader, cease to wonder that spiritual truth has made so little progress in the world, rather wonder that it has made so much; marvel not that so few know anything of God, rather marvel that even so many are found, who say, "Teach me Your way, O Lord." The idea, then, of those whom we are accustomed to call "good people" in the world, is that when they recognize the existence of God—that they do enough; when they acknowledge His moral government, no more can be required. The ideas of God's true people on these points are, however, very different. In the first place, they feel that they can neither know nor desire God's way by themselves. This they have been taught by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has made them feel that the natural bent of their minds was away from God; they have even detected their minds in the very act of loathing divine things; they have felt themselves vile and wicked, in their distaste to all that is spiritual; but with all this knowledge they could make no advance, the truth being, that they had still the carnal heart, which, no matter what it knows or feels, is, and must be, "enmity against God."

Dear reader, your own experience may doubtless be appealed to on this subject. "Was there not a time when you felt no desire to know more of God, of His laws, and ways—than you had learned in the ordinary teaching, which you received perhaps as a child? That sufficed for you; and if from time to time you saw some glimmering of light, it was just enough to make your darkness visible—but you did not care to come to the light, nor that that light should grow stronger, revealing more and more of God. The retrospect of such a season as this, makes the believer see distinctly how completely he is a debtor to grace; he says, "had I been left to myself, I would never have sought the Lord; never could I have had a yearning of heart for spiritual views of God! I remember my distaste to divine things too well, to deceive myself by supposing that I have grown into spiritual desires, or that I have struggled into them, or worked myself up to them, or have had the smallest part in procuring them for myself."

Every man that is born of the Spirit, knows that he was ignorant, and that he loved to continue ignorant, and that he felt a natural aversion to be taken out of his ignorance, and that he struggled against the workings and strivings of the Spirit be it more or less, when that Spirit came into his heart, to enlighten him about the ways of God.

Such, then, were the thoughts of God's people in former times; very different are they now. They say with the Psalmist, "Teach me Your way, O Lord." The Spirit of God has taught them that "there is a way which seems right unto a man—but the end thereof are the ways of death;" and that there is another way of which it is written, "in the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death."

Now, it sometimes happens that the process of discovery is going on for a considerable time, before the process of desire is wrought out in the heart. Many a man is having the excellence of God's ways set before him, and conviction of their excellence forced upon his conscience—before his heart is being wrought upon to respond to his judgment. While a man is in this condition, he must be very unsettled, in all probability he is very unhappy; he is losing, if he have not already lost, the measure of satisfaction which he experienced in the old ways, he has not attained to that which is to be found in "the more excellent way;" the old food is nauseous; but the new food, he

has not power to eat. And here we see how a true work upon the soul must be begun, continued, and ended in the Spirit; He must not only give the power of leaving the old way—but also that of entering on the new; and when He is carrying on this latter part of the work, He teaches the soul to cry in earnest, such words as those before us now, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth!" The ideas, then, of those who are under the teaching of the Spirit, are, in this matter of "the ways of God," entirely distinct from those of such as remain in ignorance of divine things.

Let us further inquire, with what sentiments of mind do such people desire to be taught? The answer to this question will entirely depend upon what their exact state is, when the question is asked.

Some, who are under the early stages of the Spirit's work, simply desire to have an end put to their perplexity and discomfort; they do not know as yet, that no matter what they learn, they will be ever prompted, under the living influences of the Spirit, to desire to learn yet more and more. They think that they can get some one teaching, which will put them in the same road as that which is being traveled by the children of God. There is ignorance in their wish; yet such as it is—we wish that it were shared by more. When they have attained their desire, and feel that they are indeed upon the heavenly road, they will surely pass on to a higher stage of spiritual life, and desire to know more of God's way, because they want to know more of Himself.

Progression is the law of spiritual life.

Those, however, who are advanced beyond this low point, say, "Teach me Your way, O Lord," with a higher aim. They desire entire conformity of mind with God, and as a consequent, entire conformity of life. They know that their own ways, even when most clear, and apparently unblamable, may be very far from the ways of God; and they would no more grieve Him by an ignorant act, than by a willful act. A willful act of sin is far more wicked than an ignorant one; it will be visited with far severer punishment; he who knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes, while he who knew it not shall be beaten with but few. But the difference in the amount of guilt does not set the mind of the child of God at ease. No! the Spirit-taught man has spiritual sensibilities; he feels a wound if he feel that he has broken God's law, or departed from His way, or left a portion of that way untrodden through ignorance, or if he has come short of the glory of God. Sensitiveness on these points, is the consequent of the new life, and it makes men not only quick to do what they know should be done—but further, desirous of being taught wherever they are ignorant. The child of God aims at nothing short of perfect conformity to the mind of God; he wants not only that his life should be brought into exact obedience to all declared laws—but that his mind should, by God's Spirit, be brought into harmony with God's rules of action. He knows that God sees and judges, not as man sees and judges, that He has principles of action of a standard infinitely higher than any which exists in man's highest code of morality, and so he says, "Teach me Your way!"

Dear reader, what do you know of this, in your own practical experience? Have you been content with your own way, or with the laws of morality, or with what you could pick up for yourself out of the recorded laws of God? Or have you gone further, and feeling that much more could be attained to, asked God by the Spirit to teach you, "His own way?"

It will, doubtless, be one of the delights of heaven, that there the saint shall have his mind in perfect conformity with the mind of God—but need we wait for heaven to have at least a longing for this? Oh surely not! We may say, "O teach me Your way!" now while we are upon earth. This request is ever according to the mind of God; it is one, we may rest assured, that He will be pleased to grant.

It may be practically useful to inquire, for a few moments, What it is, that God's people desire to know, when they say, "Teach me Your way"? We may make the prayer in the passage before us either generally or particularly; no doubt the people of God do both continually.

There are seasons when we feel ourselves peculiarly drawn out in desires after holiness and conformity to God, seasons of high aspirations, and O that I had them oftener—and that they lasted longer. At such times no special difficulty is before the mind, we are simply absorbed in the longing to be like God, and our thoughts are expressed in the Psalmist's words, "Teach me Your way!" The meaning of the prayer under such circumstances is this, "O Lord, I want to be like You! I want to know all that will be pleasing for me to do for You; I would understand Your principles of action; I would see more plainly, the boundary lines of the path which You mark out for Your people; yes, I would see the lines of the path on which You walk Your own self; I have no spiritual eyesight of my own with which to discern all this—Your way must be revealed by Yourself! Oh, teach it now to me!"

We may rest well assured, that whenever we feel within us a spiritual aspiration, it is capable of being productive of a spiritual result, and moreover it is intended so to be. Spiritual aspirations come from the Holy Spirit, and He bestows no gift which is not capable of putting forth vital energy, and producing its own peculiar fruits. The aspiration of which we have now been speaking, is no exception to the rule; longing for more knowledge of God, and conformity to Him in His mind and ways—will be sure to make us cry to Him to reveal Himself to us—for how can we know Him unless He manifest Himself to us? "No man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."

If, under such feelings as these, we cry, "Teach me Your way, O Lord." we shall be sure to have an answer. God will, in all probability, reveal Himself more and more to us in His holy character; He will honor us by letting us more and more into the secrets of His mind; and when He reveals to us His mind—we shall the more easily trace His way. When we say, "Teach me Your way," not under the pressure of any present doubt or difficulty—we may be sure that God will recognize the desire to know Himself. But who is there who does not know, only, alas! too well—the need of being taught what is God's way when placed in difficult circumstances, and when difficult questions arise? It is very true, that if our principles of action are taught to us by God—that they will carry us through innumerable difficulties, solving hard questions, pointing out the one right way where many roads appear to meet. But there are occasions when such principles of action do not carry us through our need. The fault may be in ourselves—but at such a time we need teaching as to which is the way of God. We are now so circumstanced that we must act one way or another; we are pressed upon from without, so that we must decide, and that perhaps at once. We may fail to trace any external indications of the Divine will; what remains for us but the Psalmist's prayer, "Teach me Your way, O Lord!" We may confidently assert that wherever this prayer is made in an earnest and honest mind—that it will be respected and answered by God. None can seek His glory

in carrying out His mind and will—without being helped to act for it by Him. We may be prepared for action; to do whatever is to be done, or to do the very reverse may be easy; the question is, "what, or which is to be done?" God will show, if we say in truth "Teach me Your way, O Lord!"

God has many ways of giving guidance—when the direction is thus left to Him. Sometimes He will close up all avenues except the right one. At other times He will so strongly impress the mind, that there can be no doubt but that He is speaking to it. Or He will, perhaps, give a wonderful unanimity of judgment to those who are consulted about the matter, so that looking at the question even from different points of view—they still come to the same conclusion. It may be that He will not use any of these means—but will so order incidental circumstances, that they may gently and almost imperceptibly put us into such a position, that we can act in but one way. He who sincerely prays, "Teach me Your way, O Lord!" shall never be left unguided.

If we turn to Psalms 32:8, we have a beautiful promise of guidance, which is well worth our consideration, from the way in which that guidance is to be given, "I will guide you with My eye." What is the promise here? That of guidance. How is this guidance to be given? By God's eye. By some no doubt it will be said, "Guidance! well, after all—that is not much; we have sufficient sense to guide ourselves; we have the Scripture, that is guide enough; we do not want a religion that deals in dreams; we understand no such peculiarities as 'guidance with God's eye.'" This is no uncommon language from the world, and very often when men shrink from saying this, they by no means shrink from acting it out. But God's people recognize in the promise of guidance a most valuable blessing. They know their position here, that they are strangers and pilgrims; they know how many roads cross, or for a time run parallel with, the way of life; they are not ignorant of the existence of myriads of evil spirits, whose sole aim is to seduce them from the narrow path, who spend every energy in trying to ruin their souls! All this they know; and they know moreover that if left to themselves—they must be seduced and finally fall away! The people of God know their need of continual guidance, and that, in every-day life—as well as in their purely spiritual things; in little matters—as well as great. But this is not always known at once. Some of the Lord's dear people have thought that they could guide themselves; they were well-intentioned; they really wished to do what was right; they were possessed of excellent natural abilities—but with all these advantages, they have gone deplorably wrong. God let them go their own way for a while, just to teach them that their way was not His, and that it was only so far as they were under His guidance—that they were safe.

There are some who it seems must be taught in this manner, or else they will not learn at all. No doubt such are saved—but no doubt also such are sorely bruised. In what position are you, dear reader, standing now? Have you learned your need of God's guidance; does this appeal to your experience; are these matters well known to you; or do you think they are things with which ordinary people have nothing at all to do? The Lord's people well know—that this guidance is a matter of absolute necessity. It is not more necessary that a little child of two or three years of age should be guided in the crowded street—than that they need God's guidance. It does not matter how old or how wise we are, or how good our natural abilities, or how often we have guided others, and advised them well in their temporal affairs; we need God's guidance in everything, in every place, and every day.

Let us inquire what is our present standing? Have we entered God's family, and learned to look into the Father's face? Have we been espoused to Christ, and learned to read His looks? Do we feel that we cannot do what is right, unless we be specifically taught by God? The phrase "doing what is right," must not now be taken in the low sense which is generally given to it by many in the world. They mean by it, coming to church, and giving some money to charities, and having family prayers, and paying their debts, and keeping good company, and being in the ordinary acceptance of the words "good moral people." But God's guidance leads a man far beyond all these. All these can be done without any guidance from heaven at all. What is now meant by "doing right," is acting consistently as a member of the family of God. When we are placed in delicate and difficult circumstances, when all ordinary landmarks are removed, when our usual counselors are silent, when even outward providential circumstances are withheld—are there such communications passing between God's mind and ours—that we can feel that we are under His guidance? Can we hear God speaking to us when there is not a sound? Can we see Him when there is not a sign? Can we read where nothing is written? Have we the experience of His love?

Say, in what does the perfection of home relationship consist? is it in the fact that meals are spread at proper hours, that cleanliness is the characteristic of the house, that there is no open jarring or quarreling, no gross violation of well known rules, and such like things? All these have their value in the happiness of home; but the perfection of happiness requires something more. The barbarian, or to use a gentler term, the unrefined mind will be content with such things as are catalogued above; but there are other minds too highly polished, too finely strung for this; their estimate of what the happiness of home should be, is pitched too high to be reached by what might be called—the common decencies and civilities of life.

No! the perfection of home relationship consists in the intuitive understanding of each other's heart, in the mutual possession of that secret, which makes one look stand for many words, yes, for feelings, which the great Creator never intended to be expressed in words at all! Such an instrumentality as this, stands in the place of a thousand rules; and gives guidance, and direction, in countless emergencies, and difficulties, and apparently little things. This is what makes brethren dwell together in unity; what anoints the wheels of life, so that they never creak and jar; no, not when they have to bear the heaviest load, or have to go over the roughest road. And now, come back from all earthly homes, to the matter which they have been illustrating, and remember that us in them, so also in the family of God, much is required, for which there is no rule, no guide—but the intuition of love; no remembrancer but (not the declaration—but) the expression of God's mind! And is it not an inestimable blessing to all who wish to be one with God, that they have given to them the promise which we have been considering now? Oh, that we so continually fixed our minds upon our Father's face, that we so daily gazed upon His looks, and that we were filled, yes, so fully, with His love, that we needed neither bit nor bridle, neither goad nor rod, nothing but a look, nothing but the fulfillment of the promise, "I will guide you with My eye!" May God give to all who read these lines, that delicate organization of heart, by which they shall have intuitive understanding of His look, and mind, and will. Oh may He separate us more and more from the heaviness of mind, which requires the bridle or the goad; oh may He refine us by the mysterious processes of His unearthly love; then, in the midst of all perplexity, we shall not be confused; in the midst of all failure we shall not be cast down; but calmly and peacefully shall we pass onward to our rest, as safe in the darkness as in the light, by the precipice as in the plain, in the crowd as

when alone; each child of God a traveler through a strange land to his own bright home, wayfaring, it is true—yet wayfaring in the security of a promise from above, hearing at every hard pass of his onward path, the promise we have here, a promise from the eternal God Himself, "I will guide you with My eye!"

Thus, then, the people of the Lord desire teaching, and that from Him, preparatory to action. They want to know God's will, in order that they may do it, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth."

Honesty of mind is a characteristic of every man really born again of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-taught man is led to say, without any reserve or limitation, "I will walk." There are many who are prepared to go so far—but no further. They will carry out God's teaching, provided it does not make too great demands upon them. Perhaps such people are not themselves conscious of the state of mind in which they are. They think that they are prepared for everything; and so they are "for everything they know;" but what if God set before them something much harder than anything that had ever entered even into their imagination?

We have such a case as this brought before us in Matthew 19:16. A young man comes to Jesus and says, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus puts forth the moral law, as a simple answer to his question, for no doubt if he kept that, without a single flaw, he could be saved by it; "if he did," but who ever did? who ever could—but Jesus? and then proceeding yet further, He says to Him, "if you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."

Here was indeed a hard trial, an opening up of a path far more difficult than had ever entered into this young man's mind; and the hard trial discovers limitations, and reservations, which otherwise might never have been perceived. Would a like trial discover like imperfections in ourselves?

If indeed we know ourselves, we shall almost tremble at this thought; we shall feel the awful solemnity of saying such words as these, "Teach me Your way, O Lord, I will walk in Your truth;" and yet we shall not dare to hold back from making them our own.

How can we be true-hearted, and yet hold back! What then shall we do? Let us prepare to pray the Psalmist's words, from the bottom of our hearts; let us also prepare to make his determination, in deep reality of soul. True! there is something solemn in this; but if we know our weakness, and simply rely upon Divine strength, we shall be carried through; God Himself will undergird us for the storm-tossed waters, through which we may be called upon to sail; by Him shall we be shod for the rough road on which we may be called upon to tread; and we shall be enabled to carry out, as well as make the determination of the Psalmist, which is before us now. Who can tell where such a walk will lead him upon earth; where, when he is done with earth forever!

S. Self-Denial

Self-Denial Philip Bennett Power "Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Mark 8:34

Once, after our Lord had spoken, it was said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" But that was not the only saying of Jesus that was hard. He very often said what men did not like to hear, and so many would have nothing to do with Him; and at times those who followed Him for a season dropped off from Him, and refused to enter into full discipleship. And it is just so now-a-days. Many people would be Christians, if everything were made so easy for them, that all through life, they might feel that they were having everything just as they themselves would like. And yet, where the matter is made easy—where men are told to believe on Jesus and have their sins forgiven—they will not accept God's way of life, just because it is so easy; and they want to do something, even though it be very hard, which they think will entitle them to heaven. So perverse is man—so inclined every way to take things by the wrong end, and so far as he can to try and overthrow the way of God.

Why does it seem very hard to man that Jesus should say "Whoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me"? Simply because he is so full of "self-love;" not a wise self-love, but a bad and foolish self-love. Man likes everything his own way—everything rose-color and smooth—he would gratify his every desire—he would never have anything cross him.

Now, if this were for man's real good while on earth, God would order that it would be so; but He knows what is in man, and that a life thus led, would leave him with a character unfit for heaven, and so He calls him to many trials.

Jesus Himself, seeing that He became one of us in all things except sin, took part in human trials and sorrows and needs, and thus became a cross-bearer. He accepted the will of God for Himself, even though He did not need crosses to make Him fit for heaven. There was no self-love in Jesus, and whatever His Father ordained for Him as His daily walk, that was the best in His judgment. He thought, as well as His word, was this: "Even so, Father—for so it seemed good in Your sight." This saying of Jesus, though it seems so hard, is yet really very good; for it tells us two important things for us to know:

- (1) how our character is to be formed for heaven;
- (2) how we are to have oneness with our Lord Himself.

If we are to come after Him—to follow Him on earth, and to heaven—we must be like Him; and we can be like Him only by following His example. We must not make our own ease—the great end of our life. We must not refuse duties because they are disagreeable. We may not have ever, as our first thought—how we shall please ourselves. This verse is a powerful one to get rid of selfishness, and whatever helps to get rid of that is very good; for the person who is given to selfishness cannot

enter the kingdom of Heaven.

It also gives us oneness with Christ. As He was, so are we in the world. We are made like the Son of God. Jesus always calls His people to be like Himself; He will make them sharers with Himself hereafter, but first He will make them sharers with Himself now. As He went through the troubled waters, and came out victoriously on the other side, so will He have His people to do; and so, hereafter, their story, when it is told, will be found always to be more or less like His.

And, surely, after all, this is a very comforting saying, and it should be very helpful. When trials present themselves, how greatly will it encourage us if we can say to ourselves, "In taking up this cross—I am following Jesus' directions, I am following Himself; I am going on the same path which He trod. He is, so to speak, just gone on before me. As He was a cross-bearer, and bore many before He bore that last sad one to Calvary—He knows all about such things. He does not call me to anything concerning which He does not know everything. He was tried in all points like me, and He went first, I have only to follow." The spirit which we must seek to have is one of readiness to take up any cross which God may present to us. We must not make or choose our own crosses. If we be willing to bear His cross, God will provide the proper one. There is no cross so unbearable as the one which we provide for ourselves. God will never lay upon any man, more than he is able to bear. "Not my will," then, "but may God's will" be the rule of my life for the coming year. With calm submission let me take up whatever You appoint as my trial—my cross in life. Let my eye be on Jesus, who, in manifold cross-bearings, went on before; and where He is now, there at last let me also, His follower, be.

S. Shadowed Face

The Shadowed Face by Philip Bennett Power

"You must put on more shadows," said an artist to a young lady who was engaged on painting a female face. "You must put on more shadows—for she is not young."

There were many shadows on the artist's own face—those of advancing years, of thought, and labor, and the wear and tear of life; and she knew well that shadows were not merely required by the rules of the painter's art—but that they were true to life. But the thought was a sad one. The world which we enter upon with such brightness—is soon seen to be full of shadows; and the longer we are in it, the farther we travel into them—the more deeply and thickly they gather upon us, until we go down to the grave; beyond which all shadows flee away in the land of light—OR deepen into darkness which may be felt.

It must not be supposed that because we introduce such a subject at the commencement of a year, that we are going to throw up a long shadow of gloom over its coming days. Far from it! God is a God of hope and joy; and with such a God we would have our readers enter on the coming year—but here in this world, here in our experiences, here on our very faces—there are many shadows—and we shall gain nothing by shutting our eyes, and saying there are no such things. And it will help us at the outset to think more kindly of shadows—if we remember how heavily they lay on the face of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. "His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness!" Isaiah 52:14. The Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old—and have you seen Abraham?" He was indeed far from fifty—He was but a little above thirty—but shadows and lines were on His face; and His enemies thought more of fifty than of thirty, when they looked upon Him. So let us not turn from shadows as a disagreeable subject, but draw from them the blessed teachings which they have for our own characters, and our own souls.

There are two kinds of shadows:

1. those which come upon us, 2. those which are made by us. The first must come, the second need not come.

Yes! as we advance in life, we find so many things which we thought solid—to be hollow; so many things which we thought enduring—to be perishable; so many things which we thought would satisfy us—to leave us unfilled; that one disappointment after another throws its shadow, first on the heart and then on the face!

Take the fairest, youngest child—encompass him with wealth, give him health, give him all that this world can bestow; yet you cannot save him from the pencil charged with the shading color—the shadows will in due time be laid on. At first they will be mere greyish tints, they will seem perhaps to make but little change; but they will deepen, and that more and more as time goes on.

Sometimes they are laid on heavily all at once—and no matter how bright things may become in after life, there they remain; they never can be effaced. But we must not accept this lot sulkily, and say, "If they must come, they must—but we would be glad if they never came."

Some little while ago, a woman who dealt in perfumes and powders of various kinds, advertised herself as able to make people beautiful forever; and it was no uncommon thing some time ago, for people to cover their face and necks with makeup, filling up the crevices which wrinkles had made, just as you put fresh plaster over an old wall to fill up the cracks—these people would have no wrinkles, no shadows.

Now, some of the most beautiful faces in the world are shadowed ones; and certainly some of the loveliest characters are the same. Therefore we are not so much to trouble ourselves about the shadows themselves—as about how they came, and what they mean. Have they come in the course of God's providential dealings? Then they are from Him, and not from ourselves; and being from Him, they are able to do us good—they are meant to do so. They are able to do what all His dealings with His people can accomplish—that is fit us for Himself.

It was by the coming up of many shadows upon Him, that Jesus, thus tried in all points like ourselves, became an experienced High Priest. Feeling for our infirmities—His sorrows fitted Him to be a sympathetic friend to us in our sorrows. And the sorrow and discipline which throw shadows are fitting us too. These are tokens of experience. They say, "A voice has spoken, telling me that this earth is not a place simply of enjoyment; that I must be preparing for an eternal world. The lightness, the garishness of our natures must be wrought upon by the great Master's hand." So then the heavy shadows made by the furrows in the face may be looked upon with reverence, with affection, with awe—when they have been the handiwork of God.

Thus let us accept them. They are His softenings—His tonings down of the roughness and crudeness of our natures— His way of drawing character.

It is the shadows which give character to a face, and it is by shadow-casting dispensations, that God gives us character. But let us take heed how WE ourselves make shadows for ourselves or for others. There are many such. They come up upon the faces of wives, and husbands and parents—and do not depart until the face becomes placid in death. The unkind word—the cruel sleight—the sad short-coming, where 'love' had reason to expect so much; all these are powerful shadow-casters. They do their work in the mansion of the nobleman, and in the cottage of the poor man; for they are the same in themselves, and have to work on people who have the same affections. The shadows, which need not have come, are those which make the world as wretched and gloomy as it is!

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