

# Good for the Flock.

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“THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE AS GOADS,  
AND AS NAILS FASTENED BY THE MASTERS OF ASSEMBLIES,  
WHICH ARE GIVEN FROM ONE SHEPHERD.”

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PRESENT AND ETERNAL,  
AND GOVERNMENTAL  
FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

ALL forgiveness is founded on the blessed work of the Lord Jesus. But it is important to distinguish between the pardon which clears us once and for ever from all our sins before God, by which we are justified, and have peace with God, and the pardon which we may receive on the way as under God's government, supposing we are pardoned and saved.

Without the work of Christ, a holy and just God, yea, a God of truth, must have held man to be what he really is, a guilty sinner, who must be judged according to his works; and we know beforehand from His word, that there is none righteous, no not one. The love of God, great as it is, so great that for us He did not spare His Son, could not say that sin was not sin, or that He was indifferent to good and evil, for He is not, and in His own nature cannot be; and if He judges and makes man himself answer for what he has done, He must judge him righteously.



Besides, we are alienated from God in heart and mind, and so really already lost. I do not now mean finally, nor that we cannot be saved out of that state; but, if we can, it is because Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. Judgment, if we come unrepentant, unbelieving, before the judgment seat of Christ, will be according to our works, and therefore condemnation; for all have sinned.

But God is love: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God has thus anticipated, in grace, that day of judgment. The same blessed Son of God, who will as Son of man sit on the judgment seat, and judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, has already, before that day, come as a Saviour, and died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and he that believeth on the Son of God shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned. Solemn as that warning is, I shall not say more of these last. The statement is plain enough and solemn enough without adding anything to it: they die in their sins and are doubly guilty; they have not only sinned against His holiness, but despised His mercy.

Supposing now we do really in heart believe in the Son of God, with a faith wrought in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and a con-

science which feels the need of grace and forgiveness, for that is the great point; a faith which has wrought true repentance, that godly sorrow and sense that we have deserved to be condemned, which make Christ and His grace and His work precious to us. I suppose we have been all brought up to believe in the blessed Lord Jesus as a divine history, but that is very different from believing in Him as meeting the need of an awakened conscience.

But, supposing I have this true faith in Him, then it behoves me to be able to say what He has done for me.

"He has died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3); "He has borne our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24); "He died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.)

So that here is our question: Supposing I have true heart faith in Him, Christ having thus died for me, what is the effect or efficacy of His death for me?

I have a perfect and eternal forgiveness and redemption according to the glory of God. I do not speak of those who neglect this great salvation; they are doubly guilty; but of what is the value of His work for those who have really a part in it? "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and

by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts xiii. 38, 39.) "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. i. 7.) "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. iv. 25 ; v. 1, 2.) "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (Rom. v. 19.) "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. viii. 30.) "By his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix. 12.) And its effect is complete (ver. 14): "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

But is this valid for ever?

We have seen that it is eternal redemption, that it purges the conscience from dead works, and gives peace with God. But Scripture is more explicit. Christ is always at the right hand of God, and has presented His precious blood to God. It is always before His eyes. But Scripture is very explicit on this point. "But this

(man), having offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God" (not like the Jewish priests standing continually at the altar, offering sacrifices which could never take away sins, Heb. x. 11). He sat down because, for redemption and forgiveness, He had done already the whole work; for (Heb. v. 14) "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." He sits there at the right hand of God till His *enemies* be made His footstool; then He will come to deal with them in judgment. But all is done for His *friends*, that is true believers, and He has sat down having finished the work, so that those who come by it have no more conscience of sins. (Ver. 2.) "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will impute no sin." "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." (Rom. iv. 7, 8.) And is it only some of them? No, that were useless. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth *no* sin, and the Holy Ghost testifies of it clearly in that same tenth chapter of Hebrews from which we have quoted: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Ver. 17.) And so plainly does He put it, that He declares that "where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." (Ver. 18.) So that, if all were not completely pardoned and effaced, there could be no remedy.

The more we consider it, the more plain it is. Christ is the Judge, and if now I can say by faith, He has loved me and washed me from my sins in His own blood, how can He, when I stand before the judgment seat, impute to me the sins He has Himself borne and put away? He would be denying the value of His own work, which is impossible.

Again, if we are believers, we are raised in glory. (1 Cor. xv. 43.) Nay, Christ shall Himself come to bring us to Himself: "Who shall change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto his body of glory." If Christ comes to fetch us, and puts us in glory, where is the place for raising any question then about our sins? And this is clearly said in John v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Is it because God is indifferent to their sins? Impossible! But He has given His Son for us. Christ has borne them already, and cannot impute them to those who believe in Him, and in the Father who sent Him in love. We know that the Lord says, "If ye do not believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins." (John viii. 24.) But if we believe in Him we have the forgiveness of our sins; not of some, to be condemned for the rest: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no

more," because "by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified." And we possess the blessedness of this word: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Hence repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in Jesus' name. The Christian has a new life from Christ, and that will shew itself in his walk. He is born of the Spirit; and the faith in Christ by which he has forgiveness makes Christ everything to him, as it is written in Colossians iii. Christ is the "everything," that is of our hearts, and He is our life.

But I now confine myself to redemption and forgiveness.

There is then a forgiveness identified with redemption and the abiding value of Christ's blood, so that our sins, none of them, are imputed to us; God remembers them no more. We have part in this through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the door by which we enter is repentance *towards God*, which faith in the word of Christ always produces. We have our eyes opened, are turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, and receive remission of our sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus. (Acts xxvi. 18.)

Under the old testament among the Jews this

full forgiveness was not known; they got a kind of absolution for each sin they committed; they were shut out from entering into the holiest by the veil, which hung before the place where God revealed Himself. Thus in Hebrews ix. it is written: "The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." But we learn, when the real work of which all these things were figures was accomplished in the death of the Saviour, that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (Matt. xxvii. 51), and we are exhorted (Heb. x. 19) in virtue of the work of Christ and the remission of our sins (vers. 17, 18), "having boldness to enter into the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say his flesh, to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." *That* one work, done once for all, never to be repeated, and effectual to give peace to the conscience, is the ground on which we have eternal redemption, full forgiveness, so that God remembers our sins and iniquities *no more*, an entrance into God's presence, and a part in the everlasting inheritance of God's children in glory.

• This great difference in the state of believers before and after the death of the blessed Lord is

celebrated by Zacharias at the birth of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner. (Luke i. 77.) "To give *knowledge of salvation* unto his people by the remission of their sins." So the repentant thief went straight into paradise with Christ; so, to the repentant woman in the city that was a sinner, the Lord said, not only, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," but, "Thy faith hath *saved* thee." (Luke vii. 48, 50.)

There is, then, for faith, a present but eternal forgiveness, founded on Christ's bearing our sins in a work which can never be repeated, its value never diminished, nor anything added to it. God has proved His value of its worth in setting Him who did it, at His right hand in glory, where He was with Him as Son of God before the world was. "*Without shedding of blood* there is no remission." This cannot be repeated. "Christ is not entered into holy places made with hands (which are the figures of the true), but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. And not to offer himself often . . . otherwise he must *often have suffered* since the foundation of the world; but now once in the consummation of ages he has appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And *as it is* appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin,



unto salvation." Those whose sins were put away the first time, He comes to take into glory, having, as to them, no more to do with sin, which He put away the first time.

But there is a government of God in this world over those who are thus redeemed, and ever has been. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." And when God exercises this discipline, which is always for our good in love, when a soul is truly humbled, He in His wisdom often takes it away, forgiving, as to His present government and ways, the sin which made it necessary. Not that all such visitations are because of sins. The world is in a state of misery through sin, and all are liable to be subject to this servitude of corruption. This the Lord states John ix. 3.

Nor even when they are sent of God in reference to the state of the soul, are they always because of sins committed; they may be to prevent them, break the will, humble us as to our state. Thus Paul had a thorn in the flesh a messenger of Satan, to buffet him, lest he should be puffed up through the abundance of revelations. Thrice he asked the Lord to take it away, but the Lord had sent it for his good, so He would not.

This government of God, and pardon as to the present inflictions of His hand, we find both in the Old Testament and the New.

Thus when God had pronounced a terrible judgment on Ahab for his wickedness, Ahab humbled himself, and God said to Elias who had carried the message to him, "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house." This had nothing to do with the saving of his soul; indeed, as far as this history informs us, he died in his sins; but he was forgiven as to that particular judgment on the earth.

So with David: when he had acted very wickedly in a particular case, though in the main one beloved of God, and glorifying Him in his walk, Nathan the prophet declares to him: "Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me." Yet in his general walk he was a man after God's own heart. Very many such instances could be adduced from the Old Testament. There was pardon of the sin as to present chastisement. David was spared and not cut off, but the child of this sin was taken from him.

So in Exodus: when God threatened to destroy all the people, He recalled His threat when Moses pleaded His promises, and sent His angel to guide them, but declared "Nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord plagued the people, because they

made the calf, which Aaron made." (Ex. xxxii. 34, 35.) But their falling in the wilderness had nothing to do with the saving of their souls: Moses and Aaron died in the wilderness too, and we know they were saints of the Lord.

It is just what is taught us in the book of Job, where Elihu interprets God's ways in chapter xxxiii. 17-30; and in chapter xxxvi. 7 he speaks expressly of a righteous man, saying, "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous," but He chastens them for their sins, and warns Job not to fight against God. If he had bowed in heart he would have been delivered from his affliction (ver. 16), and warns him, as God was thus dealing with him, to take care he was not cut off from the earth. (Ver. 12.) Yet Job was the godliest man on all the earth, but needed correction as beginning to think well of himself. (Chap. xxxi. 16 and following. Compare chapters xxix. 11 and xlii. 5, 6.)

In the New Testament we have the same chastisement and forgiveness as a present dealing of God with man on the earth for their good. See 1 Cor. xi. 30-32. They took the Lord's Supper as if it were a common meal, and the poor had not enough to eat, and the rich indulged in gluttony and wine, and many were sick in consequence and even "slept," that is, died. But all this was present chastening in this world, for the apostle says, "When we are judged, we are

chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." The Corinthians were chastened for their faults, but were not condemned as unbelievers with the world.

So we read in 1 John v. 16. And this makes us understand what mortal sin so called is. It is a sin that brings the death of the body as a chastisement, and is such that Christians cannot pray that the life of their brother may be spared, whereas in other cases they could, and their prayers were heard, and the man's life was spared who had sinned: he was pardoned in this sense. Thus Peter's indignation arose against Ananias and Sapphira, not his compassion, and they died, through their sin, as a present judgment.

So in James v. 14, 15, 16. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him." The man recovered from his sickness, was pardoned as a present thing, as to God's government in dealing with him in this world.

We must not confound this pardon which refers to God's dealing with us here, and the chastisements His love may inflict upon us, or deliver us from if we humble ourselves, and the eternal pardon of our souls which belongs to us through the redemption that the blood of Christ has wrought for us, the value of which nothing

can alter or take away. Whereas we can easily understand that, if God chastens a man for his good when he is His child, He can take off the chastisement, and in this sense pardon, the particular fault if a man humble himself, without the salvation of his soul being in question.

There is only another passage which it may be well to refer to: John xx. 23. The Lord, after He was risen, comes amongst His disciples and communicates to them the peace He had just made, and sends them out to preach that peace to others while He has gone away into heaven. In thus sending them out as His Father had sent Him, he conferred on them apostolic authority, so that they should administer this remission and forgiveness of sins to all those who believed, who became Christians. Thus when the Jews, convinced of their sin in rejecting Christ, said, thinking all was over through their rejecting Him, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter replies, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Thus becoming Christians through his ministry they received the perfect remission which Christ obtained for them.

So in Acts x. 43; only there, as Peter himself had great difficulty in receiving any who believed from among the heathen, God gave them a testimony, as Peter says afterwards, before they were

received, so that men could not refuse to receive them. So Paul gives the same testimony. (Acts xiii. 38, 39.)

And to this day, if a heathen believes in Christ and becomes a Christian by baptism, he then receives full remission of sins. Only the apostles could do it, not only with personal authority, but discernment as to the reality of the faith of those who came. (Acts viii. 28, 29.) The general truth remains sure: "By him, all that believe are justified from all things."

The same governmental forgiveness remains true, too, with the same difference. Peter does not pray for Ananias and Sapphira: it was a sin unto death, and they fell dead. So Paul (1 Cor. v. 3, 4, 5) judged to "deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." There was apostolic discernment, authority and power. Then all were called on too to act on their responsibility as the assembly of God (vers. 12, 13), and Paul associates them with him in this act of power.

In this sense the apostles had no successors. There were *local* authorities, elders, deacons, &c., but apostles were apostles, and did this with Christ's authority everywhere, only Peter specially among the Jews, and Paul among the Gentiles. (Gal. ii. 7, 8.) As such, even the greatest authorities among the Roman Catholics admit they had no successors.

But there is a succession owned of God, whose authority flows from Christ where His presence is realised in lowly grace. In Matthew xviii. 18, if a person were wronged, he was to speak to the wrong-doer, and win him if he could; if he could not, to take two or three more; if that did not succeed he was to tell it—not to the clergy, not to any priest, but—to the assembly. If the wrong-doer would not listen to the assembly, the person was free to treat him as outside it—as a heathen man and a publican. And the reason is given: that wherever two or three were gathered together in Christ's name, really met to and looking to Him, so as to act really and humbly in His Name, He being there according to this promise, the act would have in ordinary church discipline (as "putting out from among yourselves") Christ's authority, and He would own and sanction it.

It is not individual apostolic power (Peter and Paul both announce these would not be after their decease, Acts xx. 29–33) acting in Christ's name as Peter could, saying, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole," or Paul delivering to Satan, but an act within the limits of duty, presented by the word, and which Christ sanctions by His presence and authority, acting in the midst of two or three. This supposes they are in unity, really gathered to Christ's name, and truly looking to Him by the Spirit, as the only One who can exercise this authority, and

taking His word for their guide. It is this that in the word of God takes the place, I do not say of apostolic power, for it is not individual, but of apostolic authority, because it is Christ who really acts.

J. N. D.

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UNLESS I have learned the character of the flesh in the cross of Christ, I am for ever pleading for it—for ever sparing it. But if that is what the flesh would do with Christ, what can God do with it but end it? He *must* dispose of it, and must give me a nature opposed to it if I am to be brought nigh to enjoy Himself.

Nothing humbles us like looking at what we are in the light of the cross; but we have now got a nature that delights in God, that delights in His service, that delights in



His saints and in His things—a nature in which is no selfishness—and yet what a feeble manifestation of it there is in us! We too often think of the hindrances that are in us and around us, instead of what has been disposed of, and of the positive power that is given to us in order that Christ may be brought out of us. The positive side is: “We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.” The other side is, “*Always* bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.”

God comes in to help us in our often failure on this side, and so “we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” The thorn was given to Paul to keep him from being somebody, and to make him feel his nothingness and glory in it, so that he might be nothing but an earthen vessel, and that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Any acting of flesh, of self, of his own will, would prevent his being only an earthen vessel, for an earthen vessel is a weak thing that has no will of its own. Human strength and human will are only hindrances in God’s way, and yet, alas! how we forget it.

Oh, to know something more of the crippling of our own energies, of the judgment and the breaking of our own will, and of the shining in and shining out of the light from the countenance of the Saviour in the glory, of the manifestation of His life in these bodies here, till He who is our life shall appear, and we shall be manifested with Him in glory !

(J. S. O.)

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There must be preparation of heart to apprehend the ways and thoughts of God. Walking in the path in which Christ sets us, we can see all things ; walking with Christ we get the apprehension of the things belonging to us through Christ.

(J. N. D.)

MY GAIN FROM GOD WHEN I HAVE  
NOTHING ; AND MANIFOLD MORE WHEN  
I SACRIFICE ANYTHING.

LUKE XVIII. 1-30.

IN this chapter the Lord looks at the different positions, if I may so say, [in the path of His people upon earth. The seventeenth chapter gives a prophecy of judgment on the earth, which He ends by saying, "Remember Lot's wife." Now He points out the path of His people, in which there are found two classes of difficulties ; the one being that you are so weak, so small in this world, the other being that you are so great ; the one having so little, the other so much ; the one having no resources, the other many. We do not generally think that the second would be a difficulty, but it actually is a greater difficulty than the first.

The Lord sets before us a picture of the journey through the wilderness, and gives us three examples of the one who has no means, and one example of the one who has plenty. The first gets relief ; the second goes away sorrowful. Those who have earthly means rarely seek help

from God"; but when people have nothing at all to turn to, if there be any conscience, they turn to God. It is the very opposite of human judgment, which would be, that it is easier for a man to get on who has plenty of means; but the truth is just the contrary, so much so that it is "impossible with men" for those who are rich to enter into the kingdom of God; it is only "possible with God."

There is nothing, perhaps, that people like so much as to have visible means, but it too often diverts the eye from faith. I do not say that God in His mercy may not at times give means, but still, when it is so, even rich people find that large means in this world cannot produce everything. Riches cannot give them health, nor drive sickness, and sorrow, and death from their door. And as to possessions here, the fact is you cannot look for succour when you have no need.

The Lord intimates that the very *look back* is dangerous. "Remember Lot's wife." You will find whenever you stumble, that it is always because you have turned your eye to something for yourself. Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt, an example to others. You might have thought her crime very small: she was only sorry to leave the place she was in. But we are in a place that we must *not* be sorry to leave. And having brought us out, He gives us four examples of what we meet with in our

path ; three having no means, one having plenty. Where there are no means, He succours ; He makes bare His arm ; He perfectly acts for His people who have no means ; so that each may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." But the one who had plenty of means, went away sorrowful. He was sorry that He could not remain with the Lord, but He preferred his possessions to the Lord.

The first example is that of a widow, and a widow who had an adversary.

The Lord tells us when a thing is difficult, we should pray ; "Men ought always to pray and not to faint." You could not conceive anything more pitiable than this case. The widow who had lost her only son is the true picture of sorrow, but this widow with an adversary is the full picture of misery. And this miserable object gets relief from a judge who feared not God, neither regarded man. And she with no influence whatever, for a widow in Scripture represents one who is powerless. So that we have a perfectly powerless person, and that powerless person with an adversary, which greatly aggravates the case. She has no one to appeal to but a judge who is a reckless man ; who says to himself, "I fear not God, nor regard man." Well, this miserable case moves even him. He says : Though I am perfectly indifferent to everything:

else, I really must pay attention to her. Then the Lord adds : If an unjust judge is moved by a case of misery, do you think *God* will not be moved ? He has an ear for every misery on earth. Here it is a powerless woman, a sorrowful one too, deprived of everything in this world, and then beset by an adversary, and *she* moves an unjust judge ! How much more then will not such a one move the great God and the merciful ?

So, to any one here who is powerless I say, You are not without resource. " Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ? I tell you that he *will* avenge them speedily." Typically, of course, this is the remnant ; still it is "*Men* ought always to pray and not to faint." Never say, There is no resource for me. If you had means, very likely you would turn to them and find no deliverance ; but *without* resources there is a resource for you in God, that very likely you might not turn to if you had natural resources.

I doubt not there is that in people which leads them in difficulties to think only of the fact that there is *power* in God ; and it is a very necessary thing to get the sense in one's soul that " Power belongs unto God." All that the widow looked for in the judge was power ; she did not look for kindness. But I do not think it is the highest condition of soul simply to know and to trust in

the fact that God has power. The man could not have gone as he did to his friend at midnight unless he knew that he *had* bread ; and the importunity is in consequence. Hence "because of his *importunity*, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." Very often where there is the prayer of faith, there is an amount of hardness connected with it, because I am looking to God only because I know that He has power.

What I want to press is, that you have resources. It was the great mark of power in Israel, that, when everything had failed, after the ox goad, and the jawbone of the ass, and the woman's hammer, and everything had been tried, then God said, I have *one* instrument yet. *Prayer!* Samuel comes in with one sovereign remedy: that is prayer. Whatever happens, he says, I will pray, I will pray for you.

Supposing I saw a poor desolate woman now without resource and pressed by trouble, I say to her, Well, you have God to turn to ; you can turn for help to the Hand that moves the whole world. In that way this poor desolate woman has an advantage over me : I, who do not want God's interference, will not get it ; whilst her misery makes it necessary for her to go to God as her resource, and then He interferes on her behalf. He will rise and give her all that she has need of.

The second example goes a step further. I get

in it another element of what God is. We read : "Two men went up into the temple to pray : the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." The Pharisee stood boasting of what he was himself ; the publican, in quite another spirit, stood praying. It is just the difference between a person going to God knowing that he has nothing to turn to but His mercy, and one who can in his self-sufficiency commend himself. This is a most important element : I am not entitled to anything, but God has mercy. The result was that the publican went down to his house justified rather than the other.

In the widow I get God's power ; here I get His mercy. A poor failing creature down here, where do I turn to ? I turn to *God*. Suppose I had something of my own like the Pharisee, it would not put me to so high a place as God's mercy puts the publican. The publican was in a higher place morally than the Pharisee. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." I can turn to Him who is full of mercy, "whose mercy endureth for ever." I may rest in, not only His power, but His mercy. One has an outside affliction, another an inside. We all know what the name of publican implies. He was one, who, in order to be rich, sacrificed both his country and his religion ; one who gathered



taxes for the Romans, and gave up his place as a good Jew to make money. This man comes into the presence of God, and says: I cannot say anything for myself, but I can count on the mercy of God; God be merciful to me, the sinner. Thus I get not only power but mercy. I have sin inside, and an enemy outside, but I am not without resource. My very necessity makes me a fit object for God's power and mercy. There is an old saying which is a very important one: "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," when in simple faith he turns to Him.

We ought to know when we get answers to prayer. We see books printed about prayer, where we read of food provided, lodgings and rent paid, sick children raised up, in answer to prayer. But I do not think I ever read in any book on faith, that any spiritual mercy was granted, that any one's soul was brought into greater light in answer to prayer. And yet I do not know any greater favour that God could ever shew me than giving me something more of Christ, revealing to me something fresh by His Spirit.

When one spoke to the Lord of the blessedness of those who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God—the millennium—the Lord replied, I can tell you a greater thing than that; there is "a great supper" for you *now*. This is not the gospel, as some say; it is a feast; it is the fatted calf.

A soul must be converted first, then kissed, then clothed, before it can come to the great supper. I think it would be very easy to write a book as to the way in which God orders everything, even down to the very weather, if you are walking with Him. But there is a greater thing than any of these. A soul led up like Paul into the third heaven; a soul that gets an answer to the prayer that "the eyes of your heart may be enlightened to know the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of his power" in raising us up with Christ. If God gives an answer to such a prayer as that, it is a far greater favour than His supplying any temporal need here; far greater than curing your sick child or anything else.

I believe some may go on smoothly in their circumstances for a length of time, until they get a certain self-reliance, and a tone of indifference about them, which they who are not in so smooth a path cannot have, because the latter are cast upon the Lord by their difficulties. But you will often see a man, well off in circumstances, tried in health. God will keep each godly one in some way or other dependent, for He knows how blessed it is for the soul to lean upon Himself.

We now come to the third example: "They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they

rebuked them." They thought they should not trouble Him with such weak things. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of *God*." It is a remarkable thing. It is a little child, where there is no progress, no development, without education, without anything, in fact independent of all these things, that the Lord takes up as a sample of the way in which a soul gets into grace. It is not merely powerlessness and incapacity in themselves that qualify, but the fact that a little child has nothing in which he can in any way rest to obtain anything for himself: he is both weak and clinging. He is neither reduced like the widow, nor degraded like the publican. Still in either of these cases, as we have seen, we can turn to God, whether we be tried outwardly or inwardly. But neither of these is the case of the little child. "Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Why? Because their very beginning is weak, and they cannot exist without help; they seek it, and He delights to vouchsafe it.

The disciples rebuked those that had brought them, as much as to say, Do not trouble Him with such little helpless creatures as these, with neither development of head nor heart, neither strength of limb nor anything whatever to com-

mend them. In Luke it is more history, and we are only given the simple fact of His receiving them ; but in Mark, where it is service, we are told He did three things : "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." This is what He does where there is no conscious strength, but simply clinging. It is more than turning to His power or His mercy ; it is simple repose in the arms of Christ. "He took them in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and *blessed* them." The child never had any power nor any history ; it just lies there, and has the satisfaction of being taken care of. If you are not a desolate one oppressed, if you are not morally distressed, you can still in immeasurable grace as a child repose in the arms of Christ. Here, then, I get *confidence*. It is the confidence of a child : it accepts the attention and care it receives without doubt or fear. I do not, as a child, feel that I am merely a recipient ; I feel that I simply could not do without the Lord. This is what I get when I have nothing to lose and nothing to regret.

I now come to the one example of the man with plenty of means. "A certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Now here is one who is neither a widow, a publican, nor a little child. He is a ruler, not a widow ; he is a great man, not a little child ; and, instead of being a publican, he is

a very good man, one of excellent, unblemished life among his fellows. In answer to his question, the Lord only asks him as to the way in which he had fulfilled his duty to his neighbour ; and even of those commandments he leaves out "Thou shalt not covet." He does not ask him one at all of his duty towards God, because it is impossible for a natural man to keep those, though it *is* possible for him to keep his duty to his neighbour. Yet the Lord leaves out the tenth commandment, the one to which Paul refers in Romans vii. as that which convicted him of sin. The five which the Lord quotes were quite possible for an amiable man to do, who would neither kill, nor steal, nor bear false witness. So this young ruler answered : "All these have I kept from my youth up. When Jesus heard this he said, Yet lackest thou one thing : sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, follow me." He had everything ; he was not oppressed, he was a ruler ; not a publican, but a high-class Pharisee ; he was no child, not resourceless, he had plenty of possessions. The Lord directs him, Distribute your property to the poor ; reduce yourself to nothing ; take up your cross, and follow me. Have no means but me ; let me delight your heart and be your resource. No, the ruler cannot accept this, and sorrowful goes away, "for he had great possessions."

So it is practically with saints. I never see a saint in adversity get on badly, if he has faith, and I never see a saint in prosperity who gets on well if he trusts in his means. The moment a man gets means that he can rest on, then there is an opportunity for his particular worldliness to come out. When he is a poor man he cannot buy a picture ; if he were rich he could, I do not say he always does.

But now comes out another thing : mercies and ties. "He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." The Lord announces, If you give up what naturally you value, such as natural ties when they come to bar the way, when they hinder you in your path with me, I will take care that you shall gain by doing so. You shall have manifold more in this present time. If you sacrifice natural things for Christ here, you gain manifold more from Christ here. There are rich men : some are rich in friends ; others in belongings, in means, in bodily strength, in mental powers, no matter what. I say to you, if you begin to trust in such riches instead of surrendering them to Christ, you will find you are not progressing.

Now is it not pleasant for the heart to be able

thus to delight in God? To be able to say: I am a poor, feeble creature, without means; but He has taken me up in His arms, laid His hands upon me, and blessed me; whereas, if I were a man of great natural resources, perhaps I should find it very difficult to give up everything to follow Christ.

And yet it is *there* that devotedness comes in, because devotedness consists in *giving up* for Christ.

When Gideon's army was too great for God to use, He said, "Bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there." The water was the test to them. And I am sure many now turn aside after an earthly mercy. They do not cease to be Israelites, but they are no longer fit to go on, no longer fit to fight the Lord's battles.

Therefore, in conclusion, let not a single heart droop here. Surely there is immense comfort in the thought that, if I am a poor helpless widow, I can turn to the power of God; if I am in a distressed state of soul, I can rest in the mercy of God; and if I am but a feeble thing like a babe, I can be borne along in His arms. I have no resource whatever but Christ, but I am supported by His arm, and carried along in the sense of His love.

And as for those who know what it is to surrender anything here for Christ—those things which I might have, but which I give up so that

I may have more of Him ; I have no loss ; my gain is great. It is " manifold more." Let no one say, I have suffered through giving up for Christ. You have *not*. The Apostle says, All that I have given up for Him " I do count it but *rubbish*." That is the force of the word. What ! Does a man talk of losing a farthing when he has picked up a sovereign instead ! In this way I say a saint enjoys " the life that now is and that which is to come." A saint walking with God enjoys every remnant of good in this world far more than a rich man does who is surrounded with every luxury that he is dependent on. " A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." " A merry heart is a continual feast." And who is there in this room who cannot have a merry heart ?

The Lord give us all to understand what a wonderful resource He has given us in Himself, as we go travelling on through this wilderness.

(J. B. S.)

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THE Christian, who knows what it is to be a heavenly man, is down here in a scene where his heart must starve ; he will not find a bit of food



here ; he is fed from above. Christians generally are more like cattle in wintry weather. They manage to get little pickings of grass, and hay is brought to them to make up the quantity of food they need. But I am not to be in any measure supported by pickings ; I am in a place where there are no pickings to be had ; and I live on the plentiful supply that I get from above ; I do not want the grass here at all. Paul, in Philippians iii., does not want any pickings. You lie down in the green pastures where you are *full*.  
(J. B.)

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Eph. iv. 21-24. "The truth as it is in Jesus" is the "putting off" and the "putting on." It is not a question whether I have done it ; it is not speaking of people—not of Christians, but of Christianity.

(J. N. D.)

## THE ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

### EPHESUS.

ONE short expression, repeated in each of these addresses to the seven churches, brings down the substance of all to each individual believer in the present day: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." One might even be living in a country where there was nobody taking the place of the church of the living God, still that word would come home with a mighty challenge to one's soul.

There is a contrast and a correspondence between the opening and the close of this address to Ephesus. The opening is the starting-point of the bit of ground we have to examine. God set up a certain light for Christ in the world: "seven candlesticks." It was a light God had kindled for Himself, that there might be a reason why the Lord Jesus Christ should have something to do with this earth which has rejected Him. The day of Pentecost set up a certain light, and put responsibility into man's hand: he had to bear light for a Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. You, at Ephesus,

have got the responsibility of letting this light of God's own giving shine out for God.

Is God acting for Himself through Christ in connection with man, it is in connection with that testimony: it is "To him that *overcometh* will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In Genesis we see a paradise for man; here we have a paradise for God. In man's paradise were certain things, plants, trees, fruits, things in which the heart of man could find refreshment, and a particular tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of life. In the midst of God's garden of delights will be a tree of life too, and that *the* Tree of Life. We cannot doubt Who that is. Of that garden God will be able to say, Here *I* have all I desire; here *I* can expatiate. Eden was no place to satisfy me; but here I have everything to *delight* in. I have filled the earth, and there is not a single thing that does not speak to me of what is my own delight. All around is a perfect answer to my heart; poor sinners, saved by grace, filling heaven! It is God's Paradise; no hand save His has interfered there.

Now one right well understands, that when one comes home to the garden of God's delight, while it will be very blessed to look around on the saints reflecting glory, yet there will be One who will stand out conspicuously among all—the blessed Lord Jesus, the Tree of Life in the midst.

But mark what a place man gets in connection with it: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." That Tree for man? Yes! Man will be there, and have, as an overcomer, a special token of the grace of God. It is something beyond being a partaker of eternal life. Israel ate of the manna, but not of "the hidden manna." God loved to feed His people, pilgrims in the wilderness; loved, in doing it, to tie Himself by His own law of the Sabbath; but that display of His love was a passing one—one not needed in the land. But there was a portion not to pass away, a portion treasured up, not for Israel, not for the priests, it was a record to God! If Israel rejoiced in the manna, God delights in Him who was the manna. Did His delight in Christ cease when Israel needed the manna no longer? No! He loved to have the memorial of it laid up for Himself. Here is manna day by day; I take and feed on it; but how little does my heart enter into the preciousness of it to what it will do there! There will be, to those who overcome, the power of tasting God's delight in Christ as the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God. Christ, the One who can give back life to poor sinners, is the ornament in the midst of that garden of delights of God; He adorns it.

Meanwhile, what is the intermediate portion between the two—between the candlesticks and

the Tree of Life? It is the very spot on which I now stand, amidst all the difficulties I meet with daily: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The candlesticks, where are they? Had the word been, Let him that is connected with the candlesticks hear, I must have said, It is not for me, for there is nothing I can point to here. But it is, "He that hath an *ear*." I *have* an ear to hear.

Has God become a dead God because man has failed? No! He is the living God, and the God of testimony. If the candlesticks had not failed it would have proved that at last the creature could carry blessing. That is not true. God has tried man over and over again, and man has always failed. But yet God is never wearied out. The churches have all failed; God has not failed. He knew that man would fail; but, while exhaustless in the variety of blessing that is in Him, He does not change, because the creature changes; neither do His thoughts vary.

It is "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." An ear to hear. It is the very lowest qualification. It is not, Can you work?—can you do anything? Israel in the wilderness had no ear, and was overthrown; so will you be also if you have none. God says: Has my word any entrance into your hearts? Have you got blessing from anything I have ever said to you? Here is

my challenge to you: "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

"I know thy works." There is such a mixture all around; a little bit of God and a great bit of evil. The little bit of God first thought of by Christ, the great bit of evil most noticed by us.

We do not like the deep sand of the wilderness. It seems as though the living God had drawn a picture here on purpose that I might see how His eye, which I thought rested only on Christ, comes down to myself; how it weighs up everything, judges all, and puts home responsibility to me. He is marking everything that has the unsavoury taste of the wilderness about it. One reason why people do not like to recognise the ruin of the churches, and the very reason why God allowed it, is because it puts all on the individual saint. I have to pick every step of my way, to try everything, and I do not like that. It puts me under responsibility; it makes it a question between my soul and God; and that is what God meant it to be.

"I know thy works." Everything that the renewed nature puts forth as the fruit of faith in Christ, God looks on as works. There are always works of some sort, either God's or Satan's. But besides this we ought also to know what it is to labour for the Lord, not only to bear spontaneous fruit, but to have "*labour and patience*," the consciousness that we are standing against a

rapid current. Patience is not the quietness there may be when there is no difficulty.

"This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes." We cannot stand in the position God sets us in here without feeling something of the responsibility of hating evil. Is the church the place where evil is to be allowed? What does a man that has an ear hear from God? Is it toleration of evil? Besides we shall carry about to the end of our lives the law of sin and death in our members; but we shall hate our own self-will, hate the evil within, and have need of patience to bear with it. Separation from evil is one of the first principles of our position before God.

"Thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted," sketches the position of a soul when the current is rushing past it the while it is standing in integrity for God. You may find the evil strong, but you have God and you can endure; you can look for the exodus God will provide. What is the position of the church of the living God now? Everything tottering and shaking. Have you no heart for that which is dear to God? No communion with all the living members of Christ down here? I may have happy intercourse with those who feel with me, and be embarrassed in communion with those who are loving the world and not walking with Christ; but can I give them up? Not care for them? Not mourn

over them? I never can get away from them. If it is only a prayer, only a supplication, only a groan, there is always something for me to do for them before God.

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” How many have had to deplore losing their first love! though it is not true of all. Paul went on, getting strength as he went. But what if your hearts have grown cold? Has that changed the brightness and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ? Has God turned away from Him? “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works.” It is very difficult for us to discern the workings of Satan. One of his ways is to occupy young Christians with doing, and old Christians with their feelings. God’s question is neither about doings nor feelings, but about *life*—works of life; neither work without love, nor love without works. We often lose power by separating the affections of the heart from the fruits that flow from the activity of life. There is no place where life can be given or sustained except in communion with God. If God has presented light, and the heart has trifled with it, that heart will not find joy. It has trifled with what God gave for its joy, and now it is put on walking steadily with God without it; though even then joy may come in at the end of the course.



We cannot tell what the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was. God has put us where we have Him, the living God, to judge for us. I have to trust Him to shew me what is contrary to His mind. He is a God of judgment. He broke up the hold Satan had on the earth when He led Israel to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ, and then He set up the churches, connecting the whole walk of the individual with Himself as the God of judgment, of government. The God of judgment is the God of eternal blessing. If He says: I do not like that; it does not savour of mercy; it does not savour of heaven; can you say: Oh; that is said as the God of government, not as the Saviour God? He is the God in whom all our springs are, the living God; and He may deliver to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

If man has let slip all that God put into his hand, God has not withdrawn His truth. What was the power of the church then, but Jesus Christ in heaven and the Holy Ghost down here?

May the Lord bring His own word home to each one of us. He knows how to pour truth, old truth, into the heart; and the truth fills up every void, every crevice of the soul, discovers all that is there; tells of the utter failure of man, but of the utter faithfulness of God.

## SMYRNA.

We have looked at the Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God ; let us now turn to what is addressed to Smyrna, the second church.

The scene here is a contrast to that which has just been before us, which is both interesting and instructive. The address to Ephesus, *Beloved*, refers to the virgin state of the church. We find Christ there presented with certain insignia of office, such as the stars and the candlesticks. No one could hold the candlesticks but Christ Himself ; no one trim the lights but the blessed Lord. But in Smyrna, I have certain glories in the beginning and the end of the address that shew the other side. In contrast also with the position of Ephesus, we have the place in which Smyrna is found—a state of entire prostration. When Christ sees prostration He does not begin with insignia of office, which would damp the heart, and crush the spirit. He begins with *Himself*. “I am the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.” I come to you as the One in whom you will find the answer to every trial you are in. Weakness always tends to fear, but I notice the things that you fear. In Smyrna, *Preserved*, things ready to slip, Christ takes up, and saves a part. If you are strong in the Lord, you can

spring up and soar into heavenly things; and when Christ sees this state He can come and say, Where is your fruit? But when He finds what is weak (and I am sure you and I may say we are weak, the church may be said to be in its dotage), He comes in and says, *Look at Me*. See whether there is not there something to lift you clean up out of your difficulties.

I make a distinction between names and insignia. Badges may pass through a hundred hands, but the monarch never dies. So in Christ there are certain things which will pass away. For instance He will not always hold the seven stars, and walk amidst the golden candlesticks. But, on the other hand, He has names which can never pass away. He will never lose the name of Saviour; He will never lose the name of Creator. "The first and the last," in which character He comes to Smyrna, brings out the glory of His person.

It is important for souls in weakness to know that Christ does not expect anything from them. When He found me He tied my feet as a sheep's are tied, and laid me on His shoulder, and carried me off, and has cared for me ever since. The moment I think of giving back fruit to Him, if my heart is in a state of weakness, it leads to bondage.

But if I ask, Who saved me out of the world, and has cared for me ever since? I answer, Jesus

of Nazareth. Ah, but He is the first and the last! And if there is in Jesus, every time He comes to wipe away a tear, the character of the first and the last, how shall I ever stand before Him? Ah, says He, but I am He which became *dead* and am alive again. Do not you say, My weakness, my weakness; I know more of that than you do; you have not gone down into death. The worst Satan can do to me is only "absent from the body, present with the Lord." When Christ became dead He tasted death for every man. He tasted the wrath of God, one drop of which I can never taste. Death could not hold Him. He could lie there and rise up, carrying the gates of His prison like Samson.

But some in Smyrna are striving to hold on their way with God in spite of difficulties. We cannot, if we know the heart of the Lord Jesus, think that He forgets the state of the world around us. If *we* care about it, seek to pray intelligently about it, we cannot suppose that *Christ* does not look at it at all. We must know the difficulties of the times we live in, but He would not have us lost in the sense of weakness. The difficulties we are in have not exhausted the springs that are in Him. After all is over, Christ will rise up as fresh to give us blessing as if there had been no sin since Pentecost. There is no wearied eye in Him; it is all freshness, no mixture; there is all the freshness of Christ as "the first and the last."

The winding up is: "He that overcometh shall

not be hurt of the second death." Has it ever struck you how negatives are used in Scripture? No death, not this, not that. There seem two reasons for such expressions: first, the character of the blessing is such that it cannot be presented to our minds; second, God is dealing with things as is suited to our wilderness condition.

How little our hearts are made up to suffering! It is often a startle when trial reaches us! What are we called to? "As sheep for the slaughter!" These people were terribly afraid of death. If saints caught in a storm are surprised at it, how little communion they must have with Christ. We *ought* to have suffering for Christ's sake. If when it comes it produces surprise, it only shews we are not in communion with Him; if we were, we should not complain of tribulation. Even in the sorrow caused by Christians not going on well with us, we cannot say to Christ, who was down here as the Man of sorrows, See Lord, how I am forsaken! How great my sorrow! We cannot be forsaken of God. What is tribulation? Something outside, to complain of which proves we are not in fellowship with Christ. "You shall not be hurt." What are your sorrows? Christ says; what are you afraid of? Look at the glory; turn to the Paradise of God, and I will take care of the overcomer.

How blessed for the soul in its weakness, when it is laid hold of by the truth that everything

that Satan can do to it on its way home has but one end in view, and that glory! Christ limits the day. Let the enemy do all he can; there is a day beyond in which he can do nothing. God may purposely lead His sheep through a path where they shall discover their weakness, as in the case of Job, for instance. There was dross hidden beneath the surface; there was a big bit of the world in Job's heart. Satan cannot touch a hair of my head. Shall I then murmur in tribulation, instead of like Jesus saying, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" To Paul was given a thorn in the flesh.

But you answer: That is Satan, and I cannot bear to have to do with Satan. Truly there is not a sin which has not sprung from Satan; but I say, though this be from him, I will receive it from *God's* hand. God says, If you lean on anything you will have to learn not only what I am, but what a poor wretched thing you are. Paul could glory in his infirmities. You do not know yourselves if you do not know your infirmities. If you walk to the Land's End you will find out if you are a good walker—if you can go up and down hills. So, if you have walked ten years with Christ, Christ will have communicated to you in detail what a poor wretched thing He has found you. And suppose it be Satan who teaches you what a poor thing you are, yet may you glory in your infirmities!

“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” In the Paradise of God, where the heart of God will be perfectly unfolded, all the beloved victors feeding there on the Tree of Life, Christ will have His joy; God will have His joy; and the joy of the Holy Ghost will be thrilling through all!

Christ looks at *all* saints. Does He see a company of pilgrims going forth to meet Him? Do our hearts sympathise with His heart, and that in everything? Does your heart respond to the heart of Christ? If He speaks in heaven do you respond, sympathise, on earth?—sympathise in His thoughts as to the Father’s children? What a comfort in this word: “They shall not be hurt!” The wide church of God, Romanist, Protestant, Nonconformist, mixed up with every evil, we find children of God in all. But “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” Christ gives it as a comfort to my heart about those whom I love, and whom He loves, in a wrong position: they shall not be hurt. They will not walk with Christ here, but there He will triumph over their inconsistency: they shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ cares for my future glory. He says, I stand responsible for your souls before Satan and before God; and do you care nothing for my honour? It comes as an appeal to the generosity of christian love. I put it to you, are you overcomers? Surely it is as an appeal to

the very kindliness of our nature, for love begets love. "Free grace begets free grace," could write even a heathen poet. Can you say the pit is shut for you, and yet that He has not given you the faith which sets you as an overcomer? It is a practical word. He *has* given faith to overcome. He has given me *life*, and with Whom does that connect me? And with what does that life connect itself? Is it its nature to associate with things down here, or with Him from whom it comes? A man may be a Christian like Lot in Sodom. But what a difference between one who has to search out to see whether he has faith to appeal to another, and one who can say, Do not ask me if I have faith; look at my life; I have been walking with God. If you are like Lot in Sodom you must get out as fast as possible.

I am a member of Him who has overcome, and what I want is to manifest the liberty I have to be an overcomer also. There is a certain power in an overcomer of leaving things to God, a certain springiness which commends itself to others, a freedom from care. Can you say, I am an overcomer? If you have faith you are one. But I should not like my friend, who knows my life, to ask me if I am. My life should shew it. What holds the world should not hold me; the waves that wash over me should only leave me the brighter.

We are weak, and we must know it. If Christ



sees us holding up our head about anything we have been, He says, You must learn that you are thoroughly weak in yourself ; you will have nothing henceforth from Satan but perplexity. I must for a time prove your mettle, but the day is coming when Satan shall go down and you go up.

There are the two termini: before Satan was, *He* was ; he was ever "the first." And, when all evil has been purged out, Christ will rise up as "the last." *He* is your resource. As to the enemy you dread, death, He has taken away the sting of it. The expression of God's wrath, He has tasted for you. Because He took that, you shall not be hurt of the second death. But if He dwells in you with joy, it will make you overcomers now. It is the desire of my heart that we may each of us take home the thought, that there is something in Christ that I have to look at more closely—something for *myself*.

### PERGAMOS.

We now turn to the third church.

There appears here also a remarkable balance between the character in which Christ presents Himself to the church, and the promise to that church. Here it is perfection of discernment in

the person of Christ, which, as He stands in their midst, shews everything in its true colours. He can read the deep secrets of God, and desires that His people should have a heart to enter into them.

Pergamos, *Elevation*, is in a bad state. The first thing which meets our eye, on getting within the little halo in which this church and Christ are standing, is, proceeding from the mouth of Christ, the sharp sword with two edges. Christ will never cease to be the first and the last, but, blessed be God, He will cease to be the One out of whose mouth goes the sharp sword.

God speaks everything by His Son. He is the One who sees everything, not only what is outside, but what is within. There is a very fair outside elevation; there is nothing said as to what is taught; but His eye can see that certain doctrine is *held*, if not *taught*. Christ is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, as we get it in Hebrews iv.; and personally He always thinks of God's interests first. You who know anything of the presence of Christ, do you find He will spare for you? No! He is all faithfulness for God; and that is for your true interests too; but He cares for even a leaf as something precious to God. We find in the Lord Jesus the most perfect discernment; He reads everything to see whether it goes along with and comports with the glory of God. But not only personally

## ADDRESSES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

does Christ think of God's interests, but as Priest He cannot give up God's interests in His people in their connection with things here. Christ cannot say, I will not think of your health, I will only think of your feelings. His eye cares for our souls in that place where God has set Him.

How differently does Christ judge of things to what man does ! There may be much apparent devotedness, much study of the word, much running to and fro in service ; but He discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart in it all. He never balances something bad by something good, as we do ! I am about to do something. Well, what is the intent of my heart ? The thing may be apparently for God, and yet may be really done for self all the time. And He is near me as the discerner of the thoughts and intents of my heart meanwhile. He has studied me ; He has watched me, and that because He has a certain responsibility before God about me individually. Blessed security ! He has to guide and to guard His people as one jealous for God.

If God be uppermost in my soul, even if my motives are not unmixed, still His being uppermost proves the purity of my action. Both ought to be there. In Moses we see motives mixed ; in Paul, not. His motive was pure. His power lay in this ; that he had clearly before him God's purpose to glorify Christ. Thus his soul

had a certain moral position; his object, God, being before his soul, whatever was in himself came out and was judged.

Christ's eye has been on us to-day, and what has He found? Has He found anything like Himself? Has He found the answer to God's claim over us? The soul might well sink down under such a question, but, blessed be God, this is not all: He is conducting the sheep of God's pasture home. He does not say, I have taught them such and such things, now I will see how they get on. No! He has taken us up individually for blessing. He would not have us merely know that there is nothing good in us, but He will have us know God's thoughts for us. He had nothing to do with the high-minded at Pergamos. He brings out all that is discovered by His discernment, and proves that it is "not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit." If it be true that Christ is the Saviour of the lost, I wish you joy who have so been in His presence as to discover that there is nothing good in you, that you *are* lost. It is what Christ puts in, not what He brings out, that is the ground of salvation.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." "What is this?" they called it in the wilderness, this constant miracle. The types do not all point to the same glories in Christ. There is a special truth connected with the manna. It brings before us Christ as our

food for the wilderness. And it was put into the ark, and laid up before the Lord for a memorial. God has a delight of His own. It is Christ's competency to carry His people through the wilderness, and God's positive delight in it. If our thoughts of Christ come short, God's never come short. If He cares for the people of His Father, the Father delights in Him as the One who is their supply the whole wilderness course through. He, "the first and the last," He is the Christ who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Think of it! Let the saints' joy be perfect, let all hindrances be removed, yet what is their joy compared to what *God's* is? When God gets all His martyrs home, when they get their full joy, yet the joy of God will be greater. Christ says, If I know your heart I know my Father's also; I know the joy that He has; He has the manna in its vessel of gold. And this delight of God, this provision, is for you as you pass through the wilderness. And when Christ has supplied the needs of all His people, is He exhausted? No; He is ever the same; in Him is the fulness—in Him who is the delight of God. I would not lose the thought that God has a better portion than I have in Christ for a thousand worlds! Has God got down to the depth of that Christ? No, and never will! If God says to a creature, Give me, it soon comes to an end; but in Christ there is no end.

God purposely makes us pass through difficulties, in order that we may learn what we have in Christ. God has Him there in the vessel of gold, in divine glory; and down here I have His power; I may be an overcomer, and the overcomer shall taste of that manna. "I will give him to eat of the hidden manna." It is the hard unbelief of the soul about eternal things that lets it down so about temporal things.

The manna is for the *whole* camp; it is the portion of every overcomer. And then, after this, each overcomer gets something peculiarly for himself: the "white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." It is a secret thing between him and Christ. If I am an overcomer, there may be a secret between me and Christ now.

A word in connection with this stone. There were two ways in which a stone was made use of among the ancients. The first was in the trial of a person; the second in the election of any one to office. The stone spoken of here is for trial, and was large enough for the judgment to be written on it. We find that we are not black-balled: the *white* stone is put in for us by Christ; and that is enough, were my accusers far more bitter than they are. And on this stone there is a new name—a new character. A master gave his slave a new name, indicative of his character.

Poor Jacob, the supplanter, who had gone on all his life tripping up other people, gets into God's presence, who thoroughly nips the flesh, and he comes out of it an Israel, because as a man he is crippled. But when we are overcomers it is the power of God coming out in us, not the flesh being crippled.

The white stone with the new name is divinely true of us. What my name may be is a secret between Himself and my soul that no one else may know. If it were Israel I should remember what it was connected with ; it would say to me, You have no reason to boast of the way in which you have come here. If it were Job, it would tell me that no one gives such a good character of Job as God Himself does, and that in the point where we should have said he had failed : "Ye have heard of the patience of Job."

The glory is more connected with us as individuals than we have any thought of. A Paul is surrounded by his beloved Thessalonians. Paul, born out of due time, finds the twelve places occupied, but his may be higher. He has not a place in the foundation, but above it perhaps. That name may be connected with God's dealings with you. Do you ever think what name would suit you ? What name connects itself with your present walk in the wilderness ? It may be profitable to think what name would suit you. That of overcomer ? Poor Jacob did not overcome

until he got to his wits' ends. What overcomes is faith; it is that which makes me part and parcel with the Lord Jesus Christ who has overcome.

Just so far as I walk in the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, I am an overcomer. Christ has His eye upon me. He sees me to-day; he sees me to-morrow; He sees me the third day. He watches to see whether the power with which I am identified gives me power over the world, and if I have in my walk down here done with the world and Satan.

May He lead us on as overcomers here; only a little while, and we shall be with Him and like Him.

### THYATIRA.

There is connection between the addresses to Pergamos and Thyatira, which are based upon different forms of the same evil.

When, as in Pergamos, Christ is found taking care of the interests of God in His people, we find the sharp sword with two edges, which separates, which discerns, which goes into the thoughts and motives of the heart. A person comes to Christ disappointed: he has perhaps failed in service, and he turns to Christ for sympathy. He expects a soft word, but he meets the sword. Christ goes



to the bottom of the matter; He sifts it thoroughly; He says, I have to act for God; and in this it is not a question of what you are doing, but what the motives are from which you are doing it.

In Thyatira we get a deeper character of evil, so it is no longer the sharp sword even, but it is "eyes like unto a flame of fire." He lets in the light, and reads everything that is there. Saul the persecutor, exposed to those eyes, shrinks into his own dark heart; but it is all light there to Christ, and then He makes it light to Saul.

This too as "the Son of God."

And then "His feet are like fine brass." The feet are connected with service. The feet of the priest were sprinkled with blood. Those of the Son of God are of fine brass. If a thing will not bend, He can break it, can trample it down. If a thing needs help, He can go a whole journey to it in the strength of those feet.

It is one of the dearest privileges of the children of God to look around them on all that is contrary to Him, and to humble themselves on account of it; to help others out of it if possible, but to cast no stones.

The low state of this church is marked by the promise to it. To the overcomer "will I give power over the nations; he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father." This promise is what man, as man,

can enter into. When I take my power you shall share it with me.

It is a mixed scene of evil in Thyatira, and the Lord comes to shake it. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." It is the end of prophecy that it is important for us to see, not so much the details of it. God puts His stamp on everything here by prophecy.

But there is another promise to Thyatira: "I will give him the morning star." It is the present hope of Christ's heart and of ours; it is a hope, not for earth, but for heaven. I wait to see the Morning Star; directly I see it, I shall be caught up to heaven. Christ does not take His place till the night is passed. And it is *His* hope. Oh, He *does* desire it! Have you thought of, and do you long to see the Morning Star? He longs to *be* the Morning Star; I long to *see* it. Who desires it most—you, or I, or Christ? He said when on earth, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." So now does He desire to have His bride, to shew Himself as the Morning Star. Is the desire of His heart pressed on our souls? This is a practical question. At times the wilderness presses upon you; perhaps you may have had thirty years of it, and you are impatient; you are inclined to repine. Think, has not Christ waited? Why should you be impatient? Why not rather, in patient waiting with Christ, fill up the measure of His sufferings?

The overcomer shall share my power with me, and I will give him the Morning Star; he shall not merely look for it, he shall *have* it.

Now what is overcoming? Many have had the thought awakened as to overcoming. It is the victor who overcomes, but the mind does not take in what victory really is. If I look at Saul, I see a man with a high opinion of the God of his imagination, but wishing to put the true God to death. And then I see Paul come forth as the victor, one in whom is nothing contrary to Christ. The contrast between light and darkness is over. You answer; But can I turn out self? Surely not; nothing but faith can do it, faith which lays hold of the One who has overcome. The more nature comes out, the more there is for God to put down. You must get Christ in. He is the only overcomer. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." As to detail, if we look at our daily life, is the task less arduous now than it was at the first entrance of blessing to our souls? Not a bit! As to ourselves, it has not changed us; there is the old man in us as well as the new to the end.

Another thing that troubles souls is, that they ask the question, Is not joy the mark of an overcomer? *Joy?* The very contrary! If I would be an overcomer, God must so deal with me as to put self out. He lets the soul perhaps have a slip, and it is crushed. It is by humiliation that God

leads on step by step ; it is not by joy. Is the nipping of evil joy ? or of its shoots ? God crippled Jacob, but it was no pleasure to him ; and He has got to nip the root ; He has to crush it ; it is a horrid thing—this self. It will grow again out of the least little fibre, and He leaves fibres. Daniel fainted and was sick certain days, when he had revelations from God. It is not pleasant work to the flesh, the soul being brought into communion with God. It is blessed to know that Christ will change us into the same image from glory to glory ; but the process by which it is accomplished is remarkably humbling to the flesh. Nothing but the truth burning in us will carry us on where human energy fails ; the only thought that will help us is, Christ must be spoken of, for He is worthy.

We look at acts ; God looks at habits. I may, perhaps, to-day be walking quietly on under a cross under which I once winced. Christ alone can take the bad clay, put it on the wheel, and bring it out a vessel to His own praise. He nips the evil, and this is a very solemn thing. “ Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” God is working in you, take care how you walk, If God works in me I may well be confident ; but if God works in me I must also be careful.

## SARDIS.

Two thoughts may help any who have difficulties in reference to overcoming.

From the beginning God had left truths in the hands of man upon earth which pointed to the Lord Jesus ; so that, while man failed to hold the truth committed to him, the truth itself could not become null and void, because it pointed to Him. Take Noah, for instance. The sword was put into his hand, he failed to hold it ; but the promise of wielding power still points to One who shall hold the sword that Noah could not. Then again the law, with equal failure on the part of man. After that, the church set on earth ; the candlesticks set up as a witness to a risen and ascended Christ. But where are they ? Should we like to connect the name of Christ with the church of Rome ? No ! Should we like to connect it with any ? But there are beloved children of God in all. Has the church then failed ? Surely not. The churches may have failed, but the church, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, has not. "Men slept," Satan came in and sowed tares. Man failed, but Christ did not fail.

Now this may help us as to overcoming. Saul was called ; perhaps Satan's best servant ; yet the Lord Jesus said, Come Saul. Saul comes, and what does the Lord Jesus do with him ? He puts

him in a certain position, one of victory. At Pentecost the Holy Ghost witnesses that Christ is risen. What is the result? Immediately three thousand take their stand in the position of victors. Being one with the Lord Jesus, they are counted by God as victors.

Another thing. What is the power to walk in this position? Simon took his stand on it, but with what result? "Thy money perish with thee, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." Peter detected him at once. Many have taken the position, but have had no power to hold it; and no power *can*, save that of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is that alone which gives present victory. If your eye is on the wind and the waves there will be failure; but if it is fixed on the Lord Jesus, then in the measure in which you bring everything into the light of a risen Christ, in the measure in which you know nothing save Christ crucified, there is present victory. You may see neither sun, moon, nor stars for many days, but, if your eye is turned to Christ, there will be present victory.

The right doctrine is, the Lord Jesus Christ became trustee for me. I am not trustworthy. So the Lord has subscribed His name as trustee for me. If a man has subscribed his name thus, his honour is involved. So Christ in heaven, with a human heart, sympathises with me in all my difficulties down here. I may be buffeted,

but I shall sing songs in the night season. Do you speak of your weakness? If you only knew your weakness a little better, you would overcome. He may roll you down, He may make you very little, but then He will make you a channel of blessing.

Paul was taken clean off self. He was led through torrents of temptation, but he learned that he could not do without Christ, and in all he was more than conqueror. At the end of the course a great many who had seemed to start fair were still seeking a righteousness of their own; but there was such an one as poor Paul who knew nothing of himself, and God says, I can own that as a work of my own, and I must put my seal on that one. When we see Paul surrounded by his beloved Thessalonians, shall we hear him say, I have a better righteousness than you? I have been more faithful than you? No. He will be there confessing grace from first to last.

There seems to me, in the way God tests the heart and commends Himself, a key which goes into the lock of overcoming: overcoming what I am by bringing in the beauty of what Christ is.

“Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” This refers to the cleanness of robes in which Christ invests His people when they first start. The blessed Lord has not left us naked. Christ found us in our

sins, but then He did two things for us : first, He purged us by blood ; and second, He gave us a righteousness by which we draw near to God. There is something marvellous in a robe being given to me ; it is a foundation thought for my soul in the presence of God. The question is, has my guilt been put away ? and was God justified in raising Christ ? The presence of Christ at the right hand of God, as the federal Head of His people, is the answer to the question whether I am fit to appear before God.

It is important that people should know where they are. If there be a question as to being saved, there must be uncertainty as to walk : there must be a person with robes easily sullied. There are many things I could do as a moral man that I cannot do as a blood-bought saint. He calls us sons, and this name supposes us to go through the world as a washed and justified people. Sardis, as a whole, had not felt this, but some in her had, and these had garments which could be soiled. Lot's garments could not be soiled ; Abraham's could. It would have been difficult to soil Lot's robes, he was so like a worldly man, even though he vexed his righteous soul. But there were some in Sardis who had not defiled their garments, and, says the Lord, they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. At Whitsuntide there is supposed to be a pure white flock of Christ for one week ; but



there is such a thing as a robe that is white *not* for a *week*.

There was extreme care as to how they walked in the dreadful day of Sardis. The Lord says : I see some who have not defiled their robes ; they have been very careful ; and such shall walk with me in white. Have you ever sucked the honey out of this promise ? as a bee comes down on a flower ? I might be in the Greek church, and Christ might say to me there, Cheer up ; you shall walk with me in white ; you desire to walk carefully ; you have a sense of what I have done for you ; and this sense is, in my mind, connected with that scene where you shall walk with me in white.

Christ's eye is upon me. Does He see that there is a sense in my soul of the privileges He has brought me into ? He has washed me from my sins in His own blood, has that precious Lord. He has given me such a robe as this. Were He to call me at any moment I should not be ashamed. Does He see in me a kind of nervous fear to keep myself clean ? to keep myself separate from evil ?

What a thought when it comes home to me individually, is that of my Lord speaking to me of my walking with Him in white ! He Himself will be there ; He will be there, not only in innocence, but in purity. In the world there were evil reports of Him ; there will be none

there who will desire to do it. Does He wish us to think that He will walk there alone? Oh, the wretched incredulity of the heart as to the personality of the Lord Jesus! The same One who was crowned here with thorns, *He* will walk there in white. Has He never given you this promise to lift you as a lever over some difficulty?

The world says you pretend to be one about whom the Lord is occupied; but we can shew them nothing as a proof of it but that we know our own weakness; for we are not occupied with covering over, and God would have us uncovered. Faith knows that there is such a thing as a robe, a blood-washed conscience; but it will not always be a question of faith; the day is coming when He will bring forth crowns and white robes. If these promises were rested in, God's children would not have the vague ideas of heaven they so often have: a happy place, but we do not know much about it. The white robe comes down to our individuality. He will present us faultless before His presence with exceeding joy, and the sweetest part of all will be that we receive it from His own hand. The brighter the robe, the more it shews spots of defilement. *There* there will be nothing that can ever stain. Who will get the praise for not defiling their garments *now*?

And then there is the second promise: "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life."

There are two books of life. One is the Lamb's book of life; the book of eternal life. The other is what we should call the book, or roll, of the living; just as there is a book of the corps of the city, the census. Thus it is not merely a question of having eternal life, but of being found in the book of the living. One could not say of the man saved so as by fire, that his name was in the book of the living. What a difference there is among saints! Some are looking for Him; others will have to be dragged out of some corner to meet Him when He comes. God may know them, but they have never been known as effective men for Christ here. It is no little thing to be walking with the living and true God; it is no little thing to have this Christ as the Captain of our salvation; it is no little thing to be the channel through which streams of blessing flow. What a contrast there was between Israel passing through the Red Sea, and Israel marching triumphant on the other side! What a difference there is between trying to keep oneself unspotted, and throwing oneself out as largely as one can into the world, may be even from an idea of duty. Many who have found peace go back into the world. Such have not understood about the book of the living. Would you be found walking with Christ, or would you be startled by His coming? We may be accustomed to hear Him call His people by name. He

has intercourse with us as much as we have with Him. How blessed to hear the voice of Christ in communion ! How blessed to have our name in the book of the living ! He can erase a name from that. Christ says of those who are overcoming, that they need not fear it. When we have our face to God, and our back to the idol, we can count on God.

And then the third promise: "I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." There is a great want of appropriation in saints. A bee keeps to the same flower until it has sucked out all its sweetness. Our hearts ought to know something of Christ's confessing our names. Is it true that He knows us by name ? Is it true that He names us before God ? Where was Christ when He said Saul, Saul ? Where is He when He is our Advocate ? Not down here, but up there. Ah, you know little of Him if you do not know that it is true that He has named you before God. He does it now. It is the faithfulness of His love. When He rose from the grave there were but eleven, but a hundred and twenty of His disciples, but His heart loved them ; and when He went up He presented them all before God. He is our high priest. The twelve stones on the breastplate with the heaving of the high priest's breast, shewed all the movement of His heart. And if He has confessed our names on the throne of God, He will do it again in another

way. He will confess each, not in a mass, but one by one, publicly named for honour, there where Christ finds everything according to His own taste. There is a Lot whose name is not in the book ; but you, who were specially careful about your robes, I must have you named publicly. We like something vague as to the future, but when Christ deals with us, there is nothing vague. I press on you that Christ has given you these promises, and that you will have to answer *individually* as to them, for *churches* owned of God there will be none.

The Holy Ghost always gives growing desires for the present honour of Christ. May each one of us keep our robes unspotted.

### PHILADELPHIA.

Immensely comforting in reading this little book are those words "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." However poor we may be as Christians when measured by the standard of the early saints, so that we may well be ashamed, yet one cannot say truthfully one has not an ear to hear. One *has* an ear to hear ; and this makes the constant repetition of it very sweet to me. Now the Lord's eyes are marking those who have an ear,

and He has provided in the word promises specially addressed to them.

There are three points that we may notice here.

First the remarkable insignia under which Christ presents Himself to the churches, some of which are *essentially* true of Him, and some *officially* true. The first two mentioned here are essentially true of Him, and were so among men. He was the holy One and the true One. One could not thus describe even an apostle. He did all in the very character of the God of whom He was tending the lights, in the midst of the seven candlesticks. He cannot lie, and He is essentially holy.

Then, when He comes to offices, He has the key of David. It is not, as in the first chapter, the keys of hell and of death; there it is the unseen world, but here it is earth; it is the key of David. To him is attributed all the shutting up and letting out, whether of John in Patmos or Paul in Rome. If you are shut up in a kind of Pihahiroth you can say: I know the Lord Jesus has shut me up here, and He who has the key can open when He will. Whether the service be tiny or great, you must know that your source is the Lord. The least service that Paul had to do, if he had tried it in his own strength, would have broken his back. While, on the other hand, if it were the care of all the churches, if it were Christ who had opened the door, I can say Christ

is with me, and I can go quietly on. When Paul gets into fresh circumstances Christ appears afresh to him.

The second is what is very touching in this epistle. The church of Philadelphia is supposed to represent the state immediately following on Protestantism, which failed. Men are now more and more overturned; the state in this church, then, is one of extreme weakness. What a precious thing then, if the Lord Jesus Christ can say to some in it: I see your heart like a vessel in which my word is hid; "I know thy works: behold I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." It is just a few poor weak ones who have an uncommon relish for God's word.

Third, we find the overcomers. "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." There is the same harmony here as in all the addresses, between the glory in which Christ presents Himself, the state of the church spoken to, and the promise to that church. Here the church is exceedingly weak, and He comes in with a most precious word. It is most wonderful the

extent to which men, Christians, ourselves, *you and I*, have lost sight of Christ as a living person in heaven. It is sad how little the thought is in our minds, that the Son of man has a heart full of affections, has likes and dislikes, has antipathies and thoughts. He had while He was on earth, as you would have seen had you followed Him. And though He has left the earth, and is up there in heaven seated on the Father's throne, has He lost His heart? Surely not! All His sympathies are the same as ever; His affections are the same as ever; and if we have not got the thought that it is so, I think we ought to be ashamed of ourselves.

Am I very weak? Is there a little door open before me? Well what does the heart of Christ do? If I have not denied His name, there are in His heart streams welling forth which He would have me drink. The temple of *my* God; the name of *my* God; the name of the city of *my* God; *my* new name; four things most precious to the Lord Jesus. How often we think of what is precious to ourselves, and not of what is precious to Him. Are there not things that are precious to Him? You are not much taught as a Christian if you do not know that, for one thing, you yourself are precious to His soul. He says: There are these things which those who know me well know how precious they are to me. Now poor weak one, who have the little door open



before you, my sympathies flow out to you; I want to make these things *yours*.

“The temple of my God.” If speaking of a scene of earthly worship, the candlestick gives but a little light; but what of the temple spoken of in the end of this book? “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it!” And poor prodigals brought there to worship God! Is this a thought indifferent to the heart of the Lord Jesus? Ah no! It is not one spot of the earth; but it is sinners saved by grace gathered round Himself, and God and the Lamb the temple; God and the Lamb all the power of worship.

Do you understand what heavenly worship is? It is the heart finding its joy in its admiration of God’s dealings with itself as a poor sinner. God gives His Son! God gives His Spirit! Do you know what that admiration is? Do you know as the little hymn says, what it is to be “lost in wonder, love, and praise?” His heart has a fulness when all poor sinners are gathered round Him which will never be exhausted.

“And he shall go no more out!” Only a little while and then that morning without clouds; God and the Lamb, and ourselves fixedly there.

Another point comes before us with the thought of the pillar; that is the object of it: “I will write upon it the name of my God.” I shall be

there as a witness to God. It is more blessed to be witnesses *to* than witnesses *of*. Each saint will *inside* proclaim the name of God. The poor prodigal proclaimed his father's mercy in the house. When you and I are there, God will be able to say : See, here they all are ; the very sheep that I picked up ; the very same that I gathered ; Stephen, Paul, all are here. None there, save the Lord Jesus, except as poor sinners saved by grace. He will be there as the One who went to the cross in perfect obedience ; all others are there as saved by His grace, as washed in His blood. Only one Saviour, but many saved ones. Even now He is not ashamed to call us brethren ; even now we know whose we are ; then we shall be witnesses of it, and we shall witness *to* it, in the thought of which, as already said, there is something distinct.

“And I will write upon him the name of my God.” A name in Scripture always means manifestation. God's name expresses His character. He has made Himself known, not in creation, not in providence, but in redemption. The light is shining all around us, but is it merely that it may stop men's mouths ? No, blessed be God ! It is that it may bring us into His presence ; this is why He has picked us up, all good for nothing in ourselves. And He will have us at last all gathered up there, not only as worshippers but as companions, as sons in the Father's house.

Then He will say: My tabernacle is in these saints dwelling here.

The city is spoken of as the *new Jerusalem*. Jerusalem, the word means, *will provide peace*: Jehovah-Jireh-Shalom. There is a certain spot of the earth that I have marked off for myself, where there shall be peace. As to the *new Jerusalem*, it really existed before the *old*, that is in God's counsels. You will find that the foundation names of the city give you strings of glory connected with the Lord Jesus Christ. There are the twelve tribes of Israel, names of glory connected with Him; the same in the twelve apostles, who are connected with the heavenly form of government. The church does not form part of the plan of earth, but part of that for the heavenly man.

Now what is your inheritance? Can you say that nothing short of that which comes out from God is your desire? Christ's inheritance is a thing that is given to Him. There are two parts in it: one in heaven, the other on earth. The residence is twofold: it "cometh down out of heaven from my God." The blessed Lord Jesus cares for, prizes, what God has given Him; He cares about the city of His God; He says to the overcomer: Be of good cheer; you shall be made a pillar in the temple of my God; you shall bear the name of the city of my God.

"And I will write upon him my new name."

A few words upon this ; but I premise that I especially ask saints to judge what I say as to it. There are some truths, such as those connected with the mercy of God, of which I may say, This will judge you ; but there are others as to which one feels responsibility in putting them before others, and of which one says, " Judge ye what I say."

It is His own new name. The name expresses manifestation. He was Jesus down here ; He was the Son of God from everlasting to everlasting. He was here as the Lamb crucified in weakness ; His glory here was that of being the perfect servant ; He had a right to a will, but He would not have one ; from the cradle to the cross He was the manifestation, the expression, of the perfect, dependent servant. And after He rose from the dead, He tarried on earth some time, forty days ; but even then He did not put forth His power ; He did not touch earthly glory ; He said to His disciples : Patience is what you need ; you must tarry at Jerusalem until the promise of the Father comes upon you. And then He ascended up on high.

And He is still the manifestation of patience as He was then. His patience puts to shame the impatience of our hearts. We wish to snatch at a blessing. But, if we want to be like Christ, we must be waiting in patience ; just waiting till He says, Rise up. Is there no other poor sinner

to save? What patience the Lord has! And that not merely as to waiting, but towards us. He is never irritable, whatever blunders His poor servants make; He is never impatient. And when the Father says to Him, Rise up, will it be as the crucified One? No! He will then be the anointed One! And then too He will be the Man of joy, as He has been the Man of sorrows. There will be no man's joy like Christ's joy. His song will rise above all ours. He will come forth then as the Prince of *joy and gladness* especially manifested; it will be His new name then. He was known as the *suffering* One; He is now known as the *patient* One; and He shall be known as the *joy* of His people when they meet in the Father's house for ever. You will be there, you who are overcomers, and you will have this new name. It is not that you will be there an item; it is not that you will be able to say, I miss nought. Those are poor thoughts to have of glory. It is that you will be there as one in a circle, with One in the midst whose eye looks around and rests on you, and you will see that blessed eye full of joy; you will see it turn up to God and the Father, conscious of the joy, of the blessedness, of all that multitude; and you will hear Him say: All these brought nigh to thee, my Father by myself. You will see the welling joy of the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Could He see a seat vacant? No, He could not. All must be there to satisfy His heart

He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. *He* must have the joy, is a thought to my soul that is different to all else. Is it only that I want to be there? No; it is that I am *wanted* there. He will communicate to me the glory of His new name; He will make me conscious that the Father is satisfied. See, He will say, the riches of salvation embodied in this, in that, poor sinner saved by grace. If I am one of that crowd, will not my face glisten with joy to see *His* joy? To see His *manifestation* of joy? It will be upon me as He looks upon me when He sings in the midst of the great congregation, and how gladly will our lips take it up! No one ever prayed like Christ, no one will ever sing like Christ.

He puts these things before us that they may be strength for us by the way. You have got my word; you know my heart; then go forth boldly, for my strength is made perfect in weakness. In times of weakness He lets flow His comfort into our souls; makes us know that the spring of entire comfort is in Him.

The Lord enable us to take up the thought of the Lord Jesus as presented here to each one who has an ear to hear. He gives large promises; He is a free giver; He desires to communicate all His love.

## LAODICEA.

Without question the state of the assembly at Laodicea was worse than any other; it is the only one to which He says, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." But the very darkness of the moral state of Laodicea becomes a background to set forth, as it were, the gentle tenderness of the Lord Jesus; their darkness and weakness are the occasion to shew forth His faithfulness and tender love.

There is peculiar force in His titles here: "the amen," the verily, "the faithful and true witness." There is a double bearing in the manner in which He is presented. If applied to the bad state of the church, it is a most awful word; for as surely as the judgment is pronounced by Him, the verily, it will be executed. But, on the other hand, this His name, that He, the yea and amen, will have a true testimony, is very comforting to those who are willing to hear, who are perhaps straining the ear to catch hard words; but all these words of grace are sure to such an one.

He is besides "the beginning of the creation of God." He is the living stone upon which all are built. Anything not corresponding, not tallying with Him, must be found wanting.

"Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

I suppose there is scarcely a Christian who has not been ready to take these words out of Christ's mouth, and to say, *I* am poor, and blind, and naked. Directly the Spirit of God gives a sense of the failure of all around, and that we ourselves are in connection with it, there is at once the humbling confession, the casting of ourselves on His mercy ; there is nothing left to say but, *I* am a poor, good-for-nothing thing. But did the Lord ever say to a poor thing, If you can shew me some service, a life well spent, or something of that kind, all is well ? No ! On the contrary, if you say, I am rich and increased with goods, I should say the Lord will come and cut it all down. Let Christ speak for you, whilst you can only say I will not give a character of myself. When Job would maintain his character, God shewed him He could pull it all down ; but when he was in dust and ashes before God, abhorring himself, then God could stand up for His servant. Can I say, I will put in a good claim for the glory ? No, I will let Christ speak ; no one will speak so well. How does He speak of His disciples ? "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations ;" this of Peter, who said, Spare thyself. No one can speak for me like Christ can ; if He takes up the word, it is sure to stand ; if I do, it will not. If you had to speak before God for yourself, who would be the best pleader ; you, imitating and picking up His



thoughts, or Christ Himself? I would have Christ, not myself; I would leave the whole thing to God. I would rather have Him as my special pleader before God, than say anything I could for myself. Christ will give me a character when I cannot give myself one.

What exquisite love comes out in the conduct of Christ! "Behold I stand at the door and knock;" this to a church which had clean forgotten Him! He knew their hearts were not so familiar with Him as to be happy in His presence. Like Lot their hearts were crammed with the evil of the world. Christ wants to come in and make a clean riddance of everything, so that He may be there alone, so that He may go in and dwell, so that none shall be there but Himself. He is looking at our hearts to see if we are carrying about the lumber of the world; to see how much of Himself is there.

He has to counsel them to buy clothing that they may be clothed. Souls are uncommonly naked in God's presence unless Christ be their covering.

What patient graciousness there is in the way of the Lord Jesus, whether in the conversion of sinners, or in His way with poor wayworn saints! When a poor Christian gets down into the world, He may let him go into captivity until the eleventh hour, but, even then, He will say, I must be in your heart and you in mine; we must sup

together. I stand and knock at the door ; your hearing is very bad ; but I want to come in ; it is just supper time, the last hour before you go to rest. The door has been fast shut against Him hitherto, but still, as if it were His own home, He will sit to sup *there*. Men may say, oh, the joy given at this hour cannot be genuine after such a life of ups and downs ! But they forget what God is. He says to the poor soul : How simple you have been to have gone on without me all your life ; here I am at the end.

I do not see why I am not to admire Christ here. I admire a friend who watches over me and comes in to help me all unasked in a difficulty. And Christ, knocking at my divided heart till the last hour, saying, Open, open, I must come in, I *must* admire. There is something beautiful in His conduct ; His patience, His pertinacity are to be admired ; His determination to come in to the heart which has shut Him out, and sup there ; I cannot see Him so without loving Him.

Now turn to the promise. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." In these addresses to the seven churches we may notice that, when the moral state is good, the promise is high up ; but when the moral state is bad, the promise is a low one. As to the paradise of God,

a man out of communion does not know anything about it; but talk to a man of the world about a throne, and he will understand that. Here is a promise palpably addressed to sense. It is a promise which the natural heart can embrace; but it is presented in a way in which none else could present it, bringing out secrets none else know, of a walk with God of those who in the midst of ruin have kept near Him.

And it is as He has sat down on His Father's throne that they shall sit on His. Everything which brings practical conformity to Christ is sweet. We love everything that makes us a little like Him, because we love Him. A cloud received *Him* out of their sight, and *we* shall be caught up in the clouds too. So in this promise He says: I do not give you a promise that I have not proved myself. I have been in conflict, and now I am seated on a throne. You shall have the same. I conquered; a throne was prepared for me. You are in conflict; overcome; a throne shall be prepared for you. He turns to us from resting on His Father's throne, as to those who are set in the energy of his victory, and he says, You, as I was, are in conflict. He does not say, What is your conflict compared to mine? but identifies them as far as possible with Himself; he loves to associate us with Himself. If you are fighting; so was I. He has not the heart to say to any of us, What a difference between your

conflict and mine ! No, He ennobles our little bit of conflict and patience, as He says, *I* have overcome ; *you* overcome. What a heart of love He has ! How He loves to say : you poor Laodicean listening to my word, see the place I have prepared for you ! True, you are yet in the conflict, but what of that ? There is a throne prepared for me, and you shall sit upon it. You shall hear the words, " Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." You, who have an ear to hear, think of my joy in welcoming you home, in seeing you on my throne. He will not tell how all the labour was His, the sitting down ours !

How sweet is any association with Himself ! Do you know what it is to be in the conflict, and to find the Lord raking up this little thing and that, making the best of what is so unsatisfactory, while you are often forgetting what He has done for you ? He looks into your heart, and well He knows the sorrows of the wilderness, His love, which has brought you there, knows all your perils. The victory of Christ is ours. He said : " He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." He puts life into me, and He is responsible to bring it forth in that day : He begins and He ends.

Christ's life upon earth was one of constant communion with God as the perfect dependent

man ; and He will be in glory as the Son of man. All glory is given to Him as the recompense for having "humbled himself and been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." All the glory of God is connected with the recognition of what Jesus did as Son of man. It was thus that God's throne became stamped with mercy. There is no power in any but Christ. Was there a little left in Paul or in Peter ? No, none. It is all found in the blessed One. All power is given to Him as He sits upon the throne of God as the Lamb that was slain.

And is this One for me ? This Christ for me ? What shall we say ? Has He said, Chief of sinners though thou be, I have washed thee ? Then talk not to me of feebleness and weakness ; for I have given thee my own beauty.

This conflict is an uncommonly happy thing. I can say, Foolish one that I have been ! I have tried to be happy in the world, but I cannot, for the world will not know me. But happier ground is it to say : I love Him ; He was murdered here, so I cannot sit down here ; He could not find a rest here, and I cannot. I believe we may

write upon every sorrow, every trial, Christ is in this.

Three things set apart Christ in this scene: the world, the flesh, and the devil. He overcame them all. What can give joy and alacrity but knowing this? Thou, Lord, leadest us on in triumph! Talk not to the saint who knows anything of what Christ's conflict was, of the dread of conflict! Let me set my sorrows against Christ's, my conflict against Christ's! He had none to solace Him; He was forsaken of God at the last hour. True, it *is* a conflict for us; there is no mistake about that; but if I know conflict, if I know weakness, if I know powerlessness, I know what it is to fight under *Him*; and if I have nothing to say for myself, I know that He is more than conqueror for me. We need watchfulness, we need to watch against Satan, to be separate from the world; but He is there for every time of need.

People talk of romance of affection; I can only say I wish there were more of it. I wish to be where my blessed Lord was. What alone can give bounding of heart, what can give brightness of face? It is getting to Christ in heaven, and finding that He has there a heart flowing over with affection for me!

(G. V. W.)

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Only those who know God can worship Him. I get into the place of perfect acceptance through the work of Christ, and then I worship. None can worship unless in this place of divine favour ; but if I sing in the sense of the acceptance of Christ I cannot be out of tune. The essence of worship is that the Holy Ghost can take up our praises and prayers to God in perfect association with Christ.

Is all I have got of God His being satisfied with the blood ? I want my soul in the sense of *relationship* with him when I worship. And there is no worship without desire ; desire goes ever beyond present ability. Restricting it to mere praise is impossible ; it is never unmixed with prayer, though not the place properly of prayer ; but you cannot separate it from it ; it would not be genuine if you did, and that is the thing that is wanted.

(J. N. D.)

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I cannot be right in the present without judging the past, but I cannot *mend* the past. And, if really humbled, I shall not think I would do it better if I had the opportunity over again ; I would fear for myself.

(J. B. S.)

## COMMUNION OR FELLOWSHIP.

WITH WHAT AND WITH WHOM IS IT ?

COMMUNION or fellowship excludes everything evil. Consequently there must be limits to it. Scriptural fellowship starts from this basis: that those who know it, that is, Christians, are "in the light." (1 John i. 7.) Consequently it is unknown, save by this company.

There may be unanimity, one mind, or a fellowship of men in evil (as Psalm lxiv. 5 among many other places, shews), but the word *κοινωνία* is *not* so used in the New Testament, nor is it used in a bad sense there anywhere. I speak here only of the thing itself, without including other compound forms of the word; communion there is only with what is good.

So far as I can find, the word communion or fellowship occurs only nineteen times (in Eph. iii. 9 it is considered not genuine) but it is not anywhere used vaguely, that is, as including or allowing the least particle of evil. It expresses the common feelings (and common is the origin of the word) of any two or more, with respect to a third. But naturally man is only evil (see Gen. viii. 21; Rom. iii. 23), and commu-



nion in the New Testament is only with what is *good*; therefore, this third, in or respecting which we have "communion," is and must necessarily be of and from God. Scripture shews that this is so.

Let the reader now turn to the last passage of the nineteen wherein the word is found. We shall there see that it is limited to a certain company.

1 John i. 7. "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

It is not said here that we *ought* to have fellowship one with another, but that we *have it*, as the company walking "in the light." For the contrast is not between fellowship and no fellowship, but between darkness and light, for John begins by speaking of what he had seen and how the light had shone in, fellowship being introduced as the sure consequence. In verse 5 he has said that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" while this is so, observe, he almost immediately adds, that there were men then upon earth who *had* fellowship with God, and he speaks of himself as one of these: "*our* fellowship." But this fellowship he declares to be impossible if we walk in darkness. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (Ver. 6.) And further observe how all the desires of

the apostle's heart come out, in connection with the subject of fellowship, towards those to whom he writes, that they may know it. His words are the words of the Spirit of God, that have always cheered the hearts of the saints, and which reach down to and embrace *us* in this dark and perplexing day.

And now why does he write? He writes—1st (ver. 3), that they (the saints) “may have fellowship with us” (the apostles); and 2nd (ver. 4), that thus their joy “may be *full*.” Never was there, and never will there be, a day so dark for His people that GOD cannot shine through it all; and we bless His name that He never did, and He never will, withhold fellowship with Himself from those who in truth seek His face. (Ps. cxlv. 18.)

It will help to a clearer understanding of 1 John i. 7, if we keep distinct the two companies named in the chapter. There is then a company to whom this fellowship is unknown, though they may claim it. If they speak they “lie,” and if they act “they do not the truth.” They walk also “in darkness,” in contrast to others who walk “in the light.” These last form another and distinct company. They have “fellowship one with another,” and with the apostles. If they speak, it is with the sense of their relationship with the Father. Though some are babes, yet even *they* have “known the Father.” (1 John ii.

13.) John is writing to establish them in it, spite of false ones and seducers. (1 John ii. 19, 26.) He says it is "that ye may have fellowship with *us*," for he knew that the saints had the Spirit of His Son (Gal. iv. 6; 1 John ii. 20, 27), the "Spirit of adoption," so that they could enter into it. If they act, they "do righteousness" (1 John ii. 29) as those born of God. These then, and these alone, know anything of christian "fellowship." Its limits exclude all others—all that are not "in the light."

As four out of the nineteen occurrences of the word "fellowship" are found in this 1 John i., we may gather up what we can from the apostle before looking at the others. It is only of those who walk "in the light" (ver. 7), and there it is known "with one another." It is there also with the apostles (ver. 3), and it is there "with Him" (ver. 6); with Him who is at once its source and its supply.

Notice, also, brought out here, how this fellowship "with Him" has come about. He begins the epistle by telling us what he had "heard, seen, looked upon, and handled." Grace had come *down* to man, and the eternal life, Christ, had walked about among men. He was God's *gift*. "This is the record, that God hath *given* to us eternal life." (1 John v. 11.) He "came by water and blood"; cleansing and expiation were both accomplished by Him. And, as to John, two

things had followed : He had been *manifested* to him, and John had been *drawn* to Christ. (Chap. i. 2, 3 ; v. 9, 10 ; and John vi. 44, 65.) The Father had both manifested Christ and drawn to Him, as He has with all who have ever come to Him. (Matt. xvi. 17.) Only with the Father's thoughts of Him John had to do. All else in this epistle is "*the world*" (chap. ii. 16) ; and as to the world his record is brief. The world "*knew him not.*" (Chap. iii. 1.) But he could speak of fellowship with the Father, and with what but respecting the Son of His bosom ? And not only so, for if the Father had manifested the Son to John, John had known Him who was thus manifested. He knew for his own heart that he was a disciple "*whom Jesus loved,*" so that he can speak thus : "*And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*"

And to have communion with the Son, what is it but to learn of Him whose whole life down here, from infancy to the cross, was marked by the relationship *known*, which is contained in that one word "*Father*" ? (Compare Luke ii. 49, and xxii. 42.) He, the only One who perfectly knew it, has introduced us by the work of the cross into the same : "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.) And we learn of the Father and of the Son as taught of the Spirit, which is sent into our

hearts "because we are sons." (Gal. iv. 6.) Thus is it that a man of like passions with ourselves can speak of that communion in which his heart delighted, desiring the saints then, and the saints *now*, to enter into and enjoy it with him, for thus it was, and thus it *is*, that *grace* has wrought.

But having found the company wherein fellowship alone can be, and how it originated being unfolded, we must turn again to Scripture, in order to learn *what* those who form it are further privileged to have fellowship with, and this will fully come before us in the remaining fifteen occurrences of the word.

The first of these, and the first in the New Testament, we find in Acts ii. 42: "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and *fellowship*." The apostles' doctrine, what they taught, we have now in the word; but the apostles' fellowship embraced the whole habit and tenor of their daily life. To Timothy he says, while dividing and distinguishing them: "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." Communion or fellowship with the apostles demanded but one common object in life, one purpose, a daily history of long-suffering and patience. These early saints (Acts ii. 42) possessed them.

And we are not left in ignorance respecting the apostles' object. Distinctly it is placed before

us as to three of them. The word to Peter is, "Follow me" (John xxi. 22); Paul says, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. i. 21); and John writes, "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." (1 John ii. 6.) And as to the way the world acted and thinks of the apostles, both the latter are clear in their testimony: "The world knoweth us not because it knew him not:" "By which [the cross of Christ] the world is crucified unto me, *and I unto the world.*"

We leave the reader to trace out more fully what is meant then, and involved, in the path of those who continue stedfastly in the "apostles' fellowship," only asking this one question which is pressed upon our spirit: How much of this, the apostles' fellowship, in which the early saints lived, and for their preservation in which John writes his epistle, do *we* live in the full enjoyment of now?

To continue. We have seen that "*fellowship*" is with the Father, and the Son, and with the apostles. It is also with the Holy Ghost. (2 Cor. xiii. 14; and Phil. ii. 1.) We worship in the Spirit (Phil. iii. 3); pray in the Spirit (Jude 20); sing in the Spirit (Eph. v. 18, 19); and are exhorted to be "filled with the Spirit." With one common voice, and so in "communion," "the Spirit and the bride say, Come," to Him who responds immediately to that call, "Surely I come

quickly," in Revelation xxii. By the Holy Ghost also the gospel is preached, and in this also the saints have "*fellowship*": "Fellowship in the gospel." (Phil. i. 5; Gal. ii. 9.) In ministering likewise to the bodily needs of His people, we find again that the saints have "*fellowship*." (Rom. xv. 26; 2 Cor. viii. 4; ix. 13; Heb. xiii. 16.) Connected also with this caring for the temporal interests of the saints, we find in Philemon 6 "*fellowship*" again used. Philemon having "communication" (really *κοινωνία*, "communion") in the common faith of God's elect, is exhorted to make it "effectual," or *operative* in his reception and forgiveness of his former slave Onesimus, now also converted.

Of what this faith of God's elect is based on, the Lord's death, we are reminded in the breaking of bread on every first day of the week; and strikingly connected with it we again twice find the word "*communion*." "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) It is thus in His own presence, "in the midst" (Matt. xviii. 20), that we remember at the table the Lord in His death. Together there, on common ground, and all alike redeemed, we view afresh by faith "his hands and his side." We learn the preciousness of the price paid for our redemption (1 Pet. i. 18, 19), and we learn,

too, the love that paid it (John xv. 13), and also that provided it. (Gen. xxii. 8.) The object of faith, and the work accomplished by Him, are both before us in the breaking of bread. Precious to God is He who accomplished this work, and precious also to Him is that blood He has shed. In all the value of it I am there before Him. He who took my place of distance is now the accepted Man, "crowned with glory and honour." And here, and so connected with all this, I find the word "communion." Once afar off, without God and without hope in the world, I am now made nigh by that precious blood, I have this "communion of the blood of Christ," this "communion of the body of Christ," and two things follow in result in a world that crucified Him, namely, *suffering* and *consistency*.

Thus, in communion at the table, and consistent therewith, I shall learn something of "His sufferings:" "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Here we find again the word "*fellowship*" introduced. (Phil. iii. 10.) Self-ease is here excluded. Paul desired only to know practically Him who "pleased not himself"; and he says it in a day wherein he has to testify, even as to the saints, that "all seek their own," and Timothy was the only comfort he had. Death is the only terminus before the apostle in this path of consistency and



faithfulness; it looms up distinctly before him, but he fears it not and contemplates it calmly; for, if it may be in his pathway through the sufferings of which he speaks then, he says, "To die is gain." To this "fellowship of *his* sufferings," beloved reader, are *we* also called (Phil. i. 29, 30), and well may we pause and ask, What do we each know of *them*?

Finally comes in the word "*communion*" in the question of the apostle (2 Cor. vi. 14), "What communion hath light with darkness?" A question already answered by the apostle John.

These, I believe, are the only places wherein the words communion or fellowship are used. We may briefly classify them thus: Communion or fellowship is, 1, With the Father; 2, With the Son; 3, Of the Spirit, or Holy Ghost; 4, With the apostles; 5, In the faith; 6, Of the blood of Christ; 7, Of the body of Christ; 8, In ministry to the temporal needs of the saints; 9, In "His sufferings;" 10, In the gospel; and lastly, 11, With one another.

Such is the scope of christian fellowship, and such its objects. Nothing can be more *exclusive*, since it is "in the light." The simple word fellowship rings the death-knell and sounds the condemnation of everything that is not of God. Known upon earth with the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost, and in its varied exercises, which we have read, it goes on to its full measure,

to be known only in heaven, and that city of God, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," whereinto there can enter nothing "that defileth."

The allowance of evil is destructive of fellowship or communion. Therefore, in the activities of John xiii. 4-17, Matthew xviii. 15-22, and Luke xvii. 3, 4 (the reproduction on earth of Christ's present work on high), our individual and collective responsibilities one to the other are discharged, and thus *can communion one with another exist*. But the regret of some that there should be found to exist so little fellowship among Christians, that is, one with another, in the things of God, is often found to mean, when examined closely, "*It is impossible that faithfulness and fellowship can exist together—they destroy one another.*" This is man's idea. I believe we are taught just the opposite in the word; namely, that "fellowship" cannot be one with another apart from faithfulness. It is for us to take heed how we separate what God hath "joined together." We see both in Christ, fellowship and faithfulness. In fellowship with the Father Himself, He will not allow defilement in them. He cares about it, and to us also says, "Ye ought to wash one another's feet." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." This is faithfulness.

Now, beloved reader, that company *is*, with *whom alone* fellowship can be sought and found. You know you can have no fellowship with any

others; we need say no more, therefore, on that head, for you have learnt it in the word (James iv. 4). But with *what* you can have fellowship, when you have found the company, that same word must still be allowed to instruct you. It is a day when you must examine these things, and give words their right meanings. You will be questioned, doubtless, but if you have found the word of God as to the meaning of "fellowship," and with *what*, refuse evil, and *go on unhesitatingly*. Let its directions alone govern *you* and sway *your* actions, and then be content and fear nothing from either man or Satan. (See Psalm xci.)

H. C. A.

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"BE careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Glory is better than cares. We have cares and sorrows, true; and we should have more if we were living more as servants amidst the sorrows of this world—not indifferent to them—Christ was not that. But there is a getting away from Christ—a tendency to make one anxious even in caring for others. Then I

must go and tell God, and this carries me so above the cares that I can rejoice in Him in the midst of them.

And what does He give to the heart that has given all its cares to him? An answer? No—though we know He does answer—but His *peace*. Is God's heart taken up with circumstances? Is He troubled by them? Is His throne shaken by the folly and wickedness of the world? or even by the failure of the saints? Put your cares on God, and He will put His peace into your heart—the ineffable peace of God. He who knows “the end from the beginning,” the peace He is in shall keep your heart and mind.

And there is no indifference, carelessness, or coldness about it; it is our requests made known, and “with thanksgiving.” A man who takes up thanksgiving is reckoning on God; and the soul, having left all on God—having felt His hand under the trouble—can say, It is His affair, not mine. He is a happy man going through the world in this blessed fellowship with Christ; raised by the Spirit of God above his inward sorrows and his outward circumstances, and, in the power of the Spirit for inward joy, his affections free to go out to the brethren, his heart lives in the things in which Christ's heart would if He were here.

(J. N. D.)

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## THE TESTIMONY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

JOHN XVI. 1-15.

NEXT to the importance of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth, is the presence of the Holy Ghost upon it; but there is a great difference between the presence of the two. Only faith could recognise the Lord Jesus Christ, though He was visible to the eyes of men, but the Holy Ghost, though only recognisable to faith, is not visible to sight.

No one in this room can doubt for a moment that the Lord Jesus Christ was once upon earth. It is as much a fact to faith at this moment that the Holy Ghost is on earth now. Faith can recognise this.

It is impossible to convey the gravity of this truth. Nothing makes the soul so unbelieving about any truth as *acting* unbelievingly about it; but, while many admit that the Holy Ghost is here, they do not act as if He were, and consequently they produce a kind of infidelity about it in their own souls. I say, I believe the Lord is coming; then I will not insure my life, for such an act would compromise my faith. But if you say, I do believe that He is coming yet I

shall insure my life, then you surely weaken your faith in that truth, by making your act contradict your faith. In the same way if I admit that the Holy Ghost is now present, I must *act* as if He were present. Take the very common instance of a boy at school : if he thinks the principal is in the room he will generally act in a very different way to what he will if he thinks he is not. So a great deal depends on my faith in a truth. There is a general admission that the Holy Ghost is here, but I believe souls have weakened their faith in the fact by acting as though He were not. Have I in my soul the sense that the Holy Ghost, a divine Person, is present ? My natural eyes could not bear to see a divine Person, but I say I believe the Holy Ghost is now present to faith. It is not now a question of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, but of that of the Holy Ghost ; it is a question of the simple fact that He is come down, and of what He effects now that He has come down.

The first thing I wish to make simple is, that it is as much an article of faith to own that the Holy Ghost is come down, as it is that the Lord Jesus Christ once came down. It is a distinct descent from heaven. He came down from heaven, and He has never gone back again.

Now those who admit that the Holy Ghost is the One who converts hearts to God during

the absence of Christ, often do not see that the Holy Ghost is here to witness to Christ. It is often asked where is the testimony? I answer, The Holy Ghost is the testifier. In John xiv. 26 we read: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." This is all about themselves, for their own comfort. The Holy Ghost is sent by the Father in the name of Christ; sent by the Father to us, in the name of Him who had been here and had gone away. Surely the Holy Ghost comforts my heart in the absence of Christ. He is the *Comforter*. I cannot conceive anything more wonderful than to be able to say of a man walking down the street, That is a temple of the Holy Ghost! God is doing a greater thing on earth now with man than He has ever done before. He has called His Son to His own right hand in glory, but meanwhile His body is on the earth. He can say to Saul, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" But this is not all. The *Holy Ghost* is sent down from heaven to form this body on earth. God as it were, says to man: You have rejected my Son; but now, if you believe on Him, I will not only forgive you all your sins, transferring you into a new state, but I will set you up on the

earth in the very spirit of my Son. It is not the millennium at all; it is *living Christ* on earth, on the very spot where He was rejected; living *Christ*. My heart is turned to Christ through grace, and now I am set up on the very spot where I was a rejecter, not as an improved man, but as an expression of that Christ whose I am. God says, I will set you up on the earth in a new style; I will make you perfectly happy there, apart from those things which minister to the natural man. You do not find a natural man happy without suited circumstances, but here is a man, Paul, who "has nothing" and who is yet "always rejoicing." In the very spot of Christ's rejection man is set up in a new fashion, and in that new style he is able to say "always rejoicing:" or, as the Lord expresses it in His own prayer: "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves;" and in John xv.: "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." A benevolent man says: I will make this man happy; I will improve his mind; I will ameliorate his circumstances, and thus make him a different being. While God announces: In the very circumstances in which he is, I will set him up, and make him superior to his condition, to his position, to everything, for the kingdom of God is within him.

To give you an example of this, I turn to the book of the Acts, which is a book of principles.



In the third chapter I find a man lame, who is laid daily at the Beautiful gate of the temple. He cannot enter in. He is a powerless man, and a craving man. Suddenly a change comes over him. What is that change? He is found in a new power. He is "walking, and leaping, and praising God." Are his circumstances altered? Not at all! But his *state* is altered. Do you think that, if an infidel of the present day were confronted with a case like this, he would not be confounded? I never speak to an infidel of mercy, of forgiveness; I speak to him of power. When in the Gospel they began to upbraid the Lord and revile Him as to the forgiveness of the sins of the poor palsied man, He only answered them with, Then I will shew you another thing; "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he saith, Take up thy bed and go thy way into thine house." And they were all amazed at the power of God, saying, "We never saw it on this fashion." Here is a wonderful change: a man is found carrying his bed instead of lying on it; as we have it to the church of Philadelphia: "Thou hast a little strength," but the word ought to be *power*. And again, "I can do all things through him who gives me power." It is the wonderful magnificence of God's grace! Here is man set up in power in the very place of his defeat. It is not that he is an improved man,

but that he is set up in an entirely *new* fashion. It is the finish to the work of the cross. It is not only that Christ has died, but that He has gone up to God's right hand, and that from thence He says: I have not only died for your sins, but I have obtained the Holy Ghost for you. Do you know that you, individually, are set up in the power of the Holy Ghost? No one here, of course, doubts the fact that He has the Holy Ghost, but are you walking in the *power* of being indwelt by Him?

It is, then, the testimony of the Holy Ghost that I now wish to speak a few words upon. The Lord states in John xv.: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." The other side of the truth connected with the presence of the Comforter as sent by the Father, that which gives us power to cry, Abba, Father, as we read in Romans viii., I do not wish to touch on here. I just call your attention to the fact that in John xiv. He is sent by the Father as the Comforter to the hearts of His people, whereas in chapter xv. He is sent by Christ from the Father's right hand in glory to witness to Him on the earth during His absence and rejection. It is this side of the truth I wish to look at. And the more I think of it, the more I feel that saints have lost the sense of it. I believe a

flash of lightning would affect people more than the presence of the Holy Ghost does ; the former would affect their natural senses. I do not wish to affect your natural senses, but I do seek to address myself to your faith.

The Lord says, "He shall testify of me." The Holy Ghost has come down, not only for our comfort, but to testify of Christ. Now, do you ever consult the Holy Ghost about the testimony of Christ ? Is it the Holy Ghost who is the great source and leader of the testimony as to means, as to ways, as to persons ? If you believe that He is present, do you consult Him as to all this ? There is a prayer we very often make use of : "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ;" thank God, we all know something of that ; "and the love of God ;" of that too we can say we are not strangers to it ; "and the communion of the Holy Ghost ;" how much do we know of *that* ? A man would not have the unblushingness to state that he had walked down the street with a great sovereign, or that the sovereign had done so with him, if it were not true ; but we talk quite lightly of the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, and how much do we know of it ?

I wish to impress on you the simple fact, that the Holy Ghost is sent down to earth on two missions. Just as a man may have two distinct relationships ; he may be a father, and he may also be a master ; so the Holy Ghost has two

distinct duties on earth, if I may say so ; blessed be His name that I can speak so simply about Him.

• It is not everything that a man is able to say : I preach five hundred sermons in the year, and get in thousands of people to hear me. So you may, but the question is whether the Holy Ghost is with you. Another will tell me of there being no one to hear him, of there being great opposition in such a place ; indeed, if you persist in going to them, they will only put you out. I answer, They may put *me* out, but they cannot put the *Holy Ghost* out. I dwell upon the fact that *He* is here to testify of Christ. But how shall I know His testimony ? What will He do ? Chapter xvi. supplies me with what He will do. There I get two distinct marks of what the testimony of the Holy Ghost is.

But first I will say a word as to how Christ is opposed.

This blessed One had come down to earth—never was such a thing as the Son of God come down from heaven—became a man, glorified God on the earth and died for man, but He was rejected and cast out. Then He said, “I will build my church,”—the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost. But this is not all. The Holy Ghost has come down, and we are all baptized by one Spirit into one body—the body of Christ. There is a great deal of disorder in the church,

- but He has not gone away. Now what is the sin of Christendom that has brought about all this disorder? It is ignoring the fact that the Holy Ghost is dwelling in the church. Positively a great many godly people pray for Him to be sent! The Pope is set up by multitudes as the vicar of Christ upon earth; every one of us here refuse that; but, though numbers refuse the wrong one, they do not find the right One, the Holy Ghost.

Whatever God is most set upon is that which is most opposed by the enemy; it was so from the beginning. In the garden of Eden Satan came in and perverted the word of God. And in the day of the priesthood, when fire came down from heaven "and consumed upon the altar the burnt-offering and the fat," what form did the opposition take? Immediately the sons of Aaron "took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord." They added their own fire to that which "came out from before Jehovah." They said: God has sent down fire; we will help Him by adding to it. I see this around me every day. A man may have the very best intention, but he is adding to the Holy Ghost. Oh, but you answer, it is not that; it is only helping on the work, only adding to the influence. *Add* to it! This is the sin of the day. It is raising the question, "Is the Lord among us?"

When the children of Israel got into the land of Canaan, in the very moment of victory one man took a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and hid them in the earth under his tent. It was all perfectly secret; it did not compromise any one; no one knew of it; he could not hurt any one by it. He was tempting God, as if *He* would not find it out. God, then, cannot bear this; and He will not go on with them. Satan's temptation was that God would take no notice of the sin. It was tempting the Spirit of God. Other passages I might turn to as instances of tempting God, and trouble in consequence, such as Uzzah; but I go on to Acts v. where we find it as a principle affecting the church. Here not one could say that the Holy Ghost was not there. But at this very time I find two people, with what motive I cannot think, who, having some land sold it, and brought part of the price and laid it at the apostles' feet. Two things are brought out in this Scripture. These two were seeking reputation; it is hard to see why, for the church was not a place of distinction at that time. Like Achan, who sought to enrich himself at God's expense, for everything in Jericho was God's, so now these two seek to exalt themselves in God's house. And what does their action prove? It proves that the thought of their heart is, We do not believe God is here. How does Peter

meet it? "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." And when the wife comes in three hours later, having had time to consider her course, his words are still stronger: "How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" It is Satan's masterpiece. When a man is found working for his own distinction in some form or other, the while he is professing to work for God, he is tempting the Spirit of the Lord. Here two were found to agree together to act as if He were not here; and now it characterises the church's action, as though He were not here.

What is the testimony according to the Holy Ghost? It is composed of two parts. First, as it exposes the world: "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." Second: as it discloses the glory of Christ—Himself and His things.

Jude refers to some who "separate themselves, sensual, not having the Spirit." This word "sensual" would be better translated "sensational"; they depart from the Spirit ground, and act upon that of man and nature. There is no more dangerous thing. Nothing has more weakened the power of the truth in the present day than this very thing; I refer to what is called "Revivalism." I am obliged to speak

plainly. I believe no one adopts Revivalism in his preaching but he loses the power of the Holy Ghost ; he is sure to fall into human ways and means. There is an immense departure in the present day from simple acting in the power of the Holy Ghost. Then when difficulties come in, troubles as to discipline, and other things, there is not one mind, there is no power. Why ? Because you have been adding strange fire to the fire of the sanctuary, and the consequence is that now, when you want power, you discover that God is not with you. What was at the root of the action of Ananias and Sapphira ? Self-exaltation. I believe if there ever were belief in and acting on the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost, that He would undertake the arrangement of *everything* in the church—would bring the right person, the right evangelist, to the place where He needed him to witness for Christ. I once heard of an evangelist who was strongly persuaded that he should go and preach the gospel in a certain place. He went unasked, and on arriving there was told that there would certainly not be any one to hear him. “ Still I must preach to-night,” he said. And he *did* preach, though no one came to hear him ; he delivered his message, and a man listening outside the door who had not courage to go in, was converted. Here was a man led by the Spirit, and used by Him. I have not a doubt that if



we were conscious that the Holy Ghost is here, we would not do a single thing without His direction, any more than a note would come out of a pianoforte if it were not touched.

As already said, one part of His testimony is to expose the true state of things with regard to the world. How then can I use worldly means in serving Christ? I cannot let a worldly man help me to preach, or in any kind of service. I am a witness to the world of its *sin*. I can only say to it, I stand against you. It is not a question of converting souls; the moment a soul is converted it ceases to be of the world. But as to the world, I need no statistics to prove to me its sin; I have a better proof than that can give me; the Holy Ghost is the witness to me of it: "Of sin, because they believe not in me." I can convict you of the very worst sin if you do not believe on Christ.

The very first time that Paul came into Europe, Satan attempted to help him in his service; testified to his being "the servant of the most high God"; but, when Paul would not receive his help, he immediately set to work to oppose him; that very night Paul and Silas were in the inner prison and their feet fast in the stocks. The prince of the world says: Let me help you, I do not care how small the help you take from me, or what the character of it; but if you refuse it altogether, you shall have my opposition.

But it is not only "of sin because they believe not in me," but also "of righteousness, because I go to my Father." If it is sin here, it is righteousness there; the sin of the one proves the righteousness of the other. The world may do its worst in its opposition to me, I have a power that makes me superior to it. True it *has* power, but there is *another* power. It may put Paul in prison, but the prison begins to rock. The world may say to me, as it did to Paul in Philippi, I will do all I can to get people to come to hear you preach. I answer, I do not want your help, I have a power that is superior to yours, and that power is dead against you.

The power that God first gave to man in the days of Noah was a power that was downward, not upward. It was the power to suppress evil. And what did they do with it? They suppressed God's Son! "Of sin, because they believe not on me, and of righteousness because I go to my Father." He is not here. That is what is against the world. And the fact that the Holy Ghost is here proves that there is in the world a greater power than the world, and that its prince is judged.

The testimony of the Holy Ghost to us is: "He will guide you into all truth; he will shew you things to come; he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." He shews us heaven. "All things that

the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you." I have lost the world, but I have got heaven.

Well, in conclusion, I can only say, that if the heart does not receive as a matter of simple faith the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost now upon earth, all the teaching in the world will not give it. The Lord grant to each one of us to act more simply in the faith of *I believe that He is here*. Recognising Him here, I walk in the path of power.

Surely no greater subject can occupy our hearts than this on which we have been dwelling a little. If we delight ourselves in Him, He will delight us individually, will make our hearts glad with the cheer of His love, and lead us on in the power He has given us of maintaining His name on the earth.

(J. B. S.)

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IF we are keeping the word of His patience, some one or other will be sure to cross our path to whom we can testify of Him, it may be unconsciously.

(G. V. W.)

## A LETTER ON INSPIRATION.

BOTH David and St. Paul tell us about inspiration. "The Spirit of the Lord," wrote David, "spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." (2 Sam. xxiii. 2.) And, again, "My tongue is the pen of a ready writer." (Ps. xlv. 1.) "Which things we speak," said St. Paul, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, communicating spiritual things by spiritual means." (1 Cor. ii. 13.)

Revelation, then, is one thing, and inspiration is another. The former has respect to the unveiling of truth, the latter to the giving it out in the manner, the form, God would have it expressed in. Hence a man might be inspired to set forth what had not been known previously, as the prophets often did, or he might recount by inspiration things with which he was well acquainted, as Moses recounted in Numbers and Deuteronomy things about the wilderness journey; and John recounted certain things about the crucifixion, of which he was an eyewitness.

But, though a man might be used to write by inspiration, it did not follow that he was always inspired. Witness David answering Achish (1 Sam. xxvii. 10 ; xxix. 8), and Abimelech. (1 Sam.

xxi. 2.) Yet the record we have of his answers is inspired, the sacred writer having recorded them in the very language in which God willed that they should be set forth. One sees then the value of the scripture statements, that the sacred *writings* are inspired (2 Tim. iii. 16), whereas the word never calls the *men* inspired men. They were inspired when used of God to record what He intended, and in the words that He intended (2 Pet. i. 21), but all that they ever uttered was not necessarily inspired. Hence the reference made by your correspondent to 1 Thessalonians ii. 4, 5, is beside the point. The apostle is there describing how he preached. He does not claim inspiration for that, though the account he gives us there of it is inspired, being part of God's written word.

Inspiration, then, has to do with the enunciation of God's mind in words chosen of God; and both David and Paul expressly declare that it was verbal. "His *word*," said the former, "was in my tongue." "We speak in *words* which the Holy Ghost teacheth," writes Paul. And the prophets constantly affirmed it, as they said, "Thus *saith* the Lord." "Words" in 1 Corinthians ii. do not mean "arguments." Arguments there are, of course, in the written word, but all Scripture is not argument, and no one would talk of speaking in arguments.

Your difficulty in 1 Corinthians vii. will be

cleared up, I think, as you remember that he is drawing a distinction between a positive command of God, and the wisdom of the Spirit, to which he gives expression. As regards marriage, God had vouchsafed a direct command (1 Cor. vii. 10); as regards virgins, He had not. (1 Cor. vii. 12, 25, 40.) But that distinction made by the apostle does not touch the question of inspiration, which, abstractedly has not to do with the truth or falsehood of anything stated, but only with the fact that what *is* stated is set forth in words which the Holy Ghost taught. So the words of wicked people are recorded in Scripture, for example, those of the fool, who said in his heart there was no God: of course the fool was wrong, but the statement that he said that in his heart is inspired, and is part of God's written word.

Next, as to Luke i. 1-4. The sacred historian does not say he had "traced up all things from the first," but that he had perfect acquaintance from the origin with all things accurately. By what means he had that is not told us, nevertheless, he draws a distinction between himself and those who received their information from eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word. All such he puts in one class, and himself in another. Could one writing consciously under inspiration do more? Observe, too, his "order" is not that of time, but a moral order, the carrying out of a design.

And he does all this, that Theophilus might know the certainty of the things in which he had been instructed, evidently by this remark distinguishing between what he wrote, and that which others had written. With these writings Luke was apparently familiar, certainly conscious of their existence, and of their source, the eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, who, he says, declared them to us. Yet he turns from them all, and, when describing the compilations made from such sources, he does not use about them one single term, which he uses about his Gospel. In every way, then, he distinguishes between his Gospel and the efforts of the writers to whom he refers.

I would remind your friend that the word translated "*having had perfect understanding*" is the same as we meet with translated "*fully known*" (2 Tim. iii. 10), and "*attained*." (1 Tim. iv. 6.) How he was made perfectly acquainted from the outset with the things of which he writes he does not state. That it was not just what he had heard from others is clear. That he had not been an eye-witness he himself leads us to conclude. Whence, then, did he become acquainted with the things of which he writes, but from God? But had he been personally acquainted with all that he wrote, that would not have affected the character of his inspiration. Let your friend keep in mind the distinction

between revelation and inspiration, and she will see that.

Now, as to the inscriptions on the cross. It was trilingual as John tells us, Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, for that is the right order, as you will see in "Textual Criticism." Now this at once opens the door to differences in the inscriptions, according as an Evangelist gave either the Hebrew, the Latin, or the Greek.

Further, if you attentively read the statements of the Evangelists, you will see that, whilst John and Luke give professedly a full inscription, the former calling it the *title*, and the other the *inscription*, Matthew only professes to give the *accusation*, and Mark tells us he records the *inscription* of the *accusation*. (John xix. 19, 20 ; Luke xxiii. 38 ; Matt. xxvii. 37 ; Mark xv. 26.) From this I conclude Matthew only professes to give a statement of the charge against Him as put over His head. He said he was the King of the Jews, and for that ostensibly Pilate condemned Him. But John and Luke give the full text of the inscription, the former the Hebrew, and the latter, I believe, the Greek one. John mentions the Hebrew one first, and Luke, if the common reading can be relied on, mentions first the Greek.

Now examining the inscription as found in these two Evangelists, I think you will agree, that the one in John is more suited to be the



Hebrew one, adapted for the Jews to read, "Jesus the Nazorean, the King of the Jews." To a Greek the mention of Nazorean would be nothing. To the Jew it would mean a good deal. Hence in the title a Jew would naturally read, that term of contempt, Nazorean, is found. For a Greek, the simple statement, "the King of the Jews" would be sufficient to arouse his scorn.

Probably, then, the different inscriptions did not agree word for word. But there were but three, and Matthew clearly gives the full text of none. He only professes to give the cause of the Lord's condemnation, the *αἰτία*, not the *τίτλος*, as John, or *ἐπιγραφὴ* as Luke. Mark gives what he calls *ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας*, whether he intends by that to mean only the charge against Him, as Matthew gives, or a full inscription, may be a question. If the latter, it may be the Latin one, for Latin words are much met with in his Gospel. But whichever may be the right thought about Mark, it is plain that Matthew does not give a full inscription as John and Luke clearly do.

So far, then, from the difference in the Evangelists on this point militating against verbal inspiration, I have long felt they confirm it. And the terms they use, *αἰτία*, *τίτλος*, *ἐπιγραφὴ*, when noticed, help us to clear up any difficulty which has been based on the inscription.

C. E. S.

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## THE WILDERNESS.

ACTS VII. 55-60.

I HAVE been exercised as to what the practical meaning of the passage through the wilderness is, and would now speak a few words on it in connection with what I have read and with another passage of Scripture—the story of the thief on the cross. He says to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom,” and gets for answer that he should be with Him in Paradise that very day. These two cases connect themselves in my mind with what we go through the wilderness for, with what the meaning of the wilderness walk is.

Take the thief on the cross for instance. We get that he was fit to be Christ’s companion in Paradise then and there. This makes it such a striking testimony to the efficacy of Christ’s work. Nothing is more striking than his conversion; at the moment when even the disciples ran away he was found ready to say, “This man hath done nothing amiss.” And he was made fit to be with Christ in Paradise that very day. It is the same truth that we find in Colossians: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath *made us meet* to be

partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;" and further on: "You, who were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now *hath* he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his sight." It is a present thing: "In whom we *have* redemption, the forgiveness of sins." All this is possessed by the Christian, so that he can "give thanks to the Father who hath made us meet." We can all understand that, if the thief went straight to Paradise with Christ, he was fit to go there, and to be Christ's companion there. The thief on the cross is the most striking testimony to this truth; his body left there on the cross, his spirit gone to Paradise with the Lord.

And in the case of Stephen it is just the same thing; Stephen after going through the trials and sorrows of the wilderness comes to the very same point: he says, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and he goes to be with Christ. If this is so in the two cases, what is the wilderness for? That is the question.

There are many souls now, sincere souls too, who are not clear as to their acceptance. If you put it to them as a test, you find that, if they look at the judgment seat of Christ, they are not perfectly at their ease. Many who put their whole trust in Christ, who have no hope in anything else, are yet not at ease in the thought

of that day. They love to dwell on the cross, saying, That just suits me, He has washed me from my sins in His own blood; yet they are not at ease with respect to judgment.

Now, if we think of our standing in Christ, there is no place where we shall be so much at ease, for, when we stand before His judgment seat, we shall stand there perfectly like Him. We are there already raised in glory, and, of course, it is too late then to judge people who are *in* glory; I mean as to the *going* there; because they *are* there already. It is written: "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." Thus, their being there already like Him, of course there can be no question as to their fitness to be there, though of course He judges that in each which He has to. I am merely looking a little at the ground on which we are; the question I wish to speak of is further on. Our righteousness is perfect, absolute. The righteousness of God has been displayed in setting Christ at His right hand; from thence He has sent the Holy Ghost down to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: "Of righteousness because I go unto my Father, and ye see me no more." Christ, having perfectly glorified the Father everywhere, and on the cross, that terrible place, God has shewn His own righteousness

in setting Him who did this at His own right hand.

And *we* get the fruit of it all in grace. Christ glorified God as to His righteousness, as to His holiness, as to His truth, as to His grace, as to His love to the sinner. God made the captain of our salvation perfect through suffering, that He might thus bring many sons to glory. And now God's righteousness has been displayed in putting Christ up there, where *we*, too, are to get our place in the glory; where *we* are to be loved as He is loved; *we* are to get the full value of that grace. That is the righteousness of God. The righteousness of God has been displayed in putting Christ up there, and He must see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied in having us there too. And we with Paul can say: "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

But I turn for a little to the hindrances that meet a soul in seeking to get hold of this. As said already, sometimes even those who see forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ, when they think of the judgment seat, feel that all is not right with them. While they own that the only foundation of their hope is in Christ dying for their sins, yet there is a discovery in themselves of that which does not suit the judgment

seat ; there is a measure of trust, but yet things are not all straight, and so they are not at their ease.

Now many of us have learned the difference that there is between the clearing away of the guilt of the old man and the acceptance in which we are placed in the new. We read, He “ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” And : “ When he had himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” Thus we get first a deliverance from all our sins, and then the acceptance side which comes after it ; we get not only the guilt of the old place that we were in put away, but we get ourselves in a new place—the acceptance of Christ in which we stand.

The epistle to the Romans is quite distinct as to this. We read in chapter v. : “ Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ;” and then in chapter viii. we get the other side of it : “ There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*.” This is the point which puts me entirely at ease if I think of the judgment seat—“ *In Christ Jesus*.” Then He must condemn Christ if He condemns me ! “ At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and *ye in me*, and I in you.” I am in Christ Jesus through the Holy Ghost. It is not merely that there is a clearance of my Adam nature, but that

there is a positive acceptance of me in Christ, and this is a perfectly settled thing.

Now what hinders any soul here from getting this? If a man's debts are all paid, he meets his creditors with a gay face; but even so, if he has not a penny in his pocket, he must starve. And so it is with many souls, for there is all the difference between sins being cleared away and being set in a place of settled acceptance in Christ before God. With some souls it is only a question of God passing them by, as in the passover in Egypt; God as a judge, "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," passing by the sinner because he is sheltered from His judgment. When Israel was in Egypt it was thus God as a judge passed over them, because the blood of the lamb was their shelter. *Love* provided that shelter, but, as to the act, it was the *righteousness* of God passing over them. And many a soul is in this state.

But at the Red Sea the children of Israel stand still and see the salvation of God. There is no death at all here. They are brought out of Egypt into a new place; they are *redeemed*, not *passed over*, now. So it is not merely that we are passed over, that our sins are put away, but that we are no longer in the old place at all. I get, very clearly and distinctly, the two things: not only that "He has washed us from our sins in his own blood," but also that He has brought us "to God," and "has made us kings and priests

unto God and his Father." If the sins of the old man are put away, I have my place in the new man. But, this being so, what is the wilderness for?

First, however, let me say something as to what hinders people getting hold of this settled place of acceptance in Christ, which sets me at ease when thinking of the judgment-seat, because I know that I am like Him in glory before God. The hindrance is this: souls have never given themselves up. A thousand deceits of the heart are in the way; it may be the world in some form or other, but whatever form it may take, they have not given up themselves. What they have to come to is the consciousness that the poor Syrophenician woman had when she took the place of a dog; they must come to the point that they have no righteousness at all, nothing good *in* them, and not even any promises of good things *to* them. There are blessed promises for us when we are in the path, but nothing at all before.

Souls cling to one thing or another; they do not take the place of standing before God *lost*. They will even admit that they are guilty, but not lost. When I talk of guilt I refer to the day of judgment; but when I speak of being lost, I speak of *now*, of the present moment; it is *now* I am *lost*. How can I talk of being *better* if I am *lost*? The soul that can do thus has not



recognised its true position before God. It reasons: I find this and that in myself; I am not what I ought to be, and how, then, can God accept me? Do you expect God to accept you because you are what you ought to be? That is the way Satan deceives souls. The desire for holiness being there, they look for it as their ground of acceptance with God; though it is true that, if there is no desire after holiness, of course there is no seeking after God at all. I have often asked, "Would you not have more peace if you were more holy?" and the answer would be, "Oh, yes!" Then that is not the blood of Christ at all. It is true that there must be "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," but you are confounding holiness and righteousness; and you want a certain amount of holiness in yourself, so that you may be accepted before God, and that is *self-righteousness*.

Look at the story of the Syrophenician woman. She comes to the Lord and says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David! my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. And he answered her not a word." Not only this, but "His disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us." They did not really care about her at all; they only did not want to be troubled with her. And the Lord Himself says, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she

comes and worships Him, and says "Lord, help me." She perseveres; she *will* come to Him, though there is no appearance of His being willing to do a thing for her. And He only answers, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs." It sounded awfully hard. Why was it? It was to bring her to the consciousness that she *was* a dog.

It was not merely a question of His grace, of her self-righteousness, and so on, but of the fact that she had not even so much as a promise. A Canaanite had none; they were so fearfully wicked that the very land spued them out. And she was of Tyre and Sidon too—their worst cities. There was no one at such a distance from grace, too hard for repentance, and without a promise to look for the fulfilment of. I cannot take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs, was all His answer. "And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." Israel were the children; she, the dog; but still she could claim the crumbs. That is, There is goodness enough in God even for one who has *no* righteousness, who has *no* promise, and who is under the power of the devil. She had gone through all the question of righteousness, and she had none; she had gone through all the question of promise, and she had none; but she says, I rely on the heart of God, who has goodness enough even for *me*.

The Lord did not answer her until she *owned* she was a dog; He brought her down to the consciousness that she had no claim on Him whatever; and you will never get settled peace until He has brought you down to that same point. If God gave you peace before you got there, it would suppose that there was something good on your side. You want to find something in yourself; you are seeking something there to prove to you that you are accepted by Him; you have not given up yourself, and God looks exceedingly hard in such a case. And it is this which hinders so many souls. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God because the work is finished; and, as for myself, I can only say, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" I am a dog. This is real knowledge of self.

But, it is often argued, I must have forgiveness of sins before I can have peace; and I hope I am not deceiving myself in thinking that I have it. Beloved friends, it comes to this point: not that *sins* are *forgiven*, but that God has *condemned sin* in the flesh; not forgiven it, mind. "God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin* in the flesh." So I say, God has condemned sin in the flesh in the death of Christ, not *sins*. You ask, How was that? Well, Christ was made sin for the believer, there on the cross. The believer can

say, I have died with Christ. Very well, then the condemnation is past, if I died with Christ. And if I died with Christ what am I now looking for? The old man is *gone*.

You will never get settled peace until you have judged *sin* in you; nothing else but that will do it, and therefore you can look for it in no other way. But knowing this, I at once see, that that sin that I have a horror of myself, was condemned in the cross. As I read, "Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Not, as to fact, that this is all finished even yet: not until we get into the new heavens and the new earth will sin be entirely "put away;" but the work, by virtue of which it will be, has been wrought on the cross, and now "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin," no more question of it, that was done at His first coming, "unto salvation."

But I get this dealing with sin in my nature, and that I must learn experimentally. If, for instance, I say to some one, You are dead to sin, he may answer me, Indeed I am not; I was in a passion only this very morning. And then he will sit in uncertainty and discomfort, until his condition rests upon what God is to him, and what God has done for him, and not what he is in himself.

It is impossible that I can have settled peace

in any other way. I have to learn that there is no good in me; I have to give up the thought of being able to find anything in myself. In the story of the prodigal son we find he is not fit to go into the house; he is in his rags; his only thought is to be made a hired servant. But the Father brings out the best robe and puts it on him, and we hear nothing more of the prodigal son; it is all the Father now; it is He who rejoices and is glad, it is He who is merry in having him back again. The Father was on his neck even in his rags, but he is brought into the house in all the honour of Christ. A soul gets acceptance not because of what he is to God, but because God has given him in Christ a place in the last Adam when he was lost in the first.

But mark this: if you take the blood on the door post and the path through the Red Sea, you still get the man into the wilderness. When the children of Israel got to the Red Sea, God shut them up, the devil, as it were, pursuing them into the sea. And God says to them through Moses, You stand still, and there is no sea at all. The sea even protected them: "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left;" and "they walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea." And where were they brought to? Into Canaan? Not at all! It was into *the wilderness!*

This is not what we get in the thief on the

cross. There we see what the work of Christ did for that poor man ; it made him immediately "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," and took him straight with Him into Paradise. He was Christ's comfort on the cross, and His companion to Paradise. He was the only one who comforted Him in that terrible moment. This poor man was bearing the consequences of his sins as a punishment from man, whilst Christ was bearing them as a punishment from God, and the efficacy of His work was sufficient to take this man to glory. How little the soldiers thought when they were breaking his legs, that they were sending him straight off to Paradise !

But there is something I wish to speak of which is beyond this question of acceptance ; there is something else I have to learn, when, as an accepted person, I come to walk with God. God has stepped in as a deliverer, and brought us to Himself in Christ. Now I find that we are constantly confounding our journey through the wilderness with the fact that God has in spirit brought us already to Himself ; but the very fact of being in the wilderness proves that we are not yet at home.

But there is something besides acceptance connected with salvation. The blood being on the door-post there was no judgment for the children of Israel, whilst they fed in peace on the slain lamb. So we read, "Christ our passover is sacri-

ficed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." And again, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation for all men hath appeared, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And again, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death;" but now, "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Thus we are brought out into the wilderness. He may take the thief straight off to Paradise to shew the value of Christ's work, or He may be glorified in the long life of Paul serving Him down here in the power of the Holy Ghost, blessedly glorifying his Master.

And now I again ask, How comes it that we are put through the wilderness?

Supposing that you are settled as to the first question we have been looking at, that you know yourself accepted in the Beloved, do you think you know the difference between flesh and spirit, and all the rest that is in you? I do not think you do. So God puts me through the wilderness, because it is a question of that exercise of heart which ends by enabling me to say, "That is the world; that is the flesh; that is the devil." We

have to meet this trinity : the world, the flesh, and the devil ; they are here, and are often not judged in many things. We have not learned to distinguish the difference. We take many an amiable flesh for spirit. God says to us, I have justified you perfectly, I have redeemed you perfectly, I have taken you clean out of the place you were in, and I have set you in Christ, but I have still a great deal to do with you.

We have now to learn to discern good and evil according to the nature of God. Our path is now to be that of those who "yield ourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness." It is that we may become servants of God. That is what God is doing in leaving us here.

Flesh was perfectly judged in the thief on the cross ; it is the cross that judges flesh. But, besides this, are there not things here that you do not like giving up ? Are you dead to everything here ? I begin by saying *I am dead*. I must say it, or I shall never get on at all. And, however I may fail, yet it is true that I have "no more conscience of sins." I read, "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Never for one moment, when I go to God, ought I to think that God can impute



anything to me. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." This is a most important truth. You may plead that it is using liberty for a cloak of licentiousness, and ask "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" "God forbid," answers the apostle; "how shall we that have died to sin live any longer therein?"

God then puts us through a process to teach us what we are saved *from* and what we are saved *to*. Look at Moses. He begins by killing the Egyptian. Was that the Spirit of God? Not at all! He had most blessed faith; he could give up Pharaoh's court, could give up everything, to take his place with those wretched slaves making bricks without straw; but he did not know *himself*. It is not a question of acceptance at all; it is this exercise of heart where I learn to discern between flesh and spirit. So it says: "Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness." Do you know all that is in your heart? Surely not. And unless you keep very close to God you will fall, and Christ will be dishonoured.

"To humble, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every

word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Allow me to ask you, Do you live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God? Do you never do anything but what is by His direction? "He fed thee with manna, which thou *knewest not*."

But more than this. In the wilderness we learn the *patience* of God. He never takes His eyes from the righteous, that is why He deals with them in discipline. It is "that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man." Do you think there is never pride in your heart? He teaches us that there is; He makes us find it out. The wilderness is no part of God's *purpose* for man, but it is His *way* with him. His *purpose* is to bring us into the same glory with Christ—into Canaan. The Lord Himself quoted from Deuteronomy, for He had to meet all the trials and difficulties of the wilderness; He learned all it meant as He went through this world.

God's ways with His people are very precious things. He humbles us and teaches us what is in our hearts. Just think of His never withdrawing His eyes from such a poor creature as I am! He has to sanctify me according to the holiness of the place in which I am set. He exercises my mind in order that I may see His holiness. As a saved person I am brought to God, and it is His purpose not to let evil touch me. He sent Paul

a thorn in the flesh, lest he should be puffed up. It is not always positive transgression that He deals with me about; with Paul it was preventive discipline. In going through such exercise we get quietness of heart, and learn God in all His patient, constant grace. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous." Thus the flesh is judged. If I were always walking before Him in a perfectly humble spirit, I should never dishonour Christ, though I might be very ignorant. But God cannot be in communion with that which is not of Himself.

If I turn to the thief on the cross, I see that everything was judged in him. What he had been in this world had brought him to the gibbet, and there he learned, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts," and "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

All this he learned in the cross, but learned it in the grace of Christ who was crucified for his sin. The world and the flesh were to him *on* the cross; and where was his heart? "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." It is the most unclouded faith. Just as surely as Christ is there beside him on the cross, so surely will He come in His kingdom. Such is his faith that the shame of sin is lost in his perception of Christ, and he prays that He may remember him—where? Hanging on the gibbet? It would

not be very blessed to be remembered in such a place. He wants to be remembered, he who thus hung in just punishment for his sins, when Christ should come in His glory. And of Him he witnesses, "This man hath done nothing amiss."

And then he calls him "*Lord.*" And what is his request? It is not, Take away a little of my pain. No; it is "Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Just as certain he is of His coming in His kingdom as that he then saw Him on the cross. Christ was everything to him; to be with Him was all he wanted. And the Lord answers: You shall not wait for that until I come in my kingdom; *to-day* you shall be with me in Paradise. Thus I get in this thief a soul given up to the consciousness of what Christ is. Of course he did not know the gospel as we have had it since; he could not know Christ in the glory, for He was not yet there; but all his heart wanted, was to be with Christ where He was.

In Stephen I get quite another thing. Here it is practically the cross: he was killed for Christ's sake, so it was certainly taking up his cross and following Christ. We find Stephen looking up into the glory and saying, "Lord, Jesus, receive my spirit." He sees *into* the glory; but whilst he thus sees into it, he does not say one word about it; he simply says, I see the Son of man in it; and the consequence is, that he is exactly

like Christ. The Lord Jesus said of His murderers, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do;" and Stephen says of his, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And we may say so too, in any suffering for righteousness' sake that we may be called to go through, though we cannot say "*they know not.*"

It is the same thing in principle for us that it was for the thief. We are called to be dead to the world, not by being on the cross as the poor thief was, but, like Stephen, through seeing the glory where Christ is. So the Christian learns to see what is of Christ in himself and what is not. Sin in the flesh is condemned in the cross of Christ. The whole of what the thief was as a son of Adam was gone in the cross. Man and God had both stepped in to deal with his sin, and as the consequence he goes to Paradise with Christ.

But the wilderness is the place in which I learn myself. Perhaps I wish to do right, but I must get knowledge of what the flesh is. Does my eye affect my heart in nothing? Is there nothing that I allow in my life that is not Christ? Is Christ *everything* in my heart?

You will find there are three men in you. There is Christ at the bottom of my heart, and there may be a blameless walk at the top; but what has my heart been upon all this day? There is that *middle* man; has *it* been upon

nothing but Christ? He *is* all, as a matter of fact; but *is* He all from day to day? Is He "all, *and in all*"? He *is* life in us, and He must be *all*. As to fact there is flesh and spirit, and a multitude of things between.

Now the purpose of God was to take the children of Israel out of Egypt and to bring them into the land of Canaan. He speaks of nothing else. If you look in Exodus iii. 8 you will not find a word about the wilderness. God's purpose for us is to bring us into the glory of Christ, where He is. But God delights in us, and says to us, "My son, give me thine heart." I get that we are to "yield ourselves unto God;" that we are to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Have we done this? Is there no wish, no looking for anything here? Is there no desire for anything except Christ in us? It is: "present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your intelligent service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." You will find failure and shortcoming in carrying it out, and thus you will learn yourself and learn God too.

This is what the wilderness is. Christ's work made the poor thief fit to go to Paradise that day, but even for him the world and the flesh

were on the gibbet; whilst in Stephen it was perfectly death to the world, seeing Christ in the glory, and being just like Him, but with this difference, that, when the Lord was on earth, the heavens looked down on Him, whilst Stephen looks up into the heavens and sees Christ there. Christ could not have become anything by looking into heaven; Stephen by doing so was transformed into His likeness.

Thus flesh and the world are done with; and what a blessing it is to think that, whilst we are passing through the wilderness, He is conforming us to Christ in this way. The Father's loving government comes in; He is a "holy Father," and He wants hearts that will reflect practically what is in Himself. And so we have to judge ourselves that Christ may come out in our ways. To think that it is God's purpose to have us with His Son in glory! That is what is in God's heart, what is in the Father's heart; and Christ will not see of the travail of His soul, will not be satisfied, until He has us up there with Himself.

Is it with each one of us "This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"? The Lord only give us grace to have the cross upon self; to know what it is to have crucified the flesh with

the affections and lusts, to be crucified to the world and the world to us as we pass through it. Death must come in on everything here ; it did so actually in the two cases we have been looking at ; but, like Stephen, may we so see Christ in the glory of God that we may be like Him, and thus say, " Come, Lord Jesus."

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THE time is short, and so *the Lord* is doing all for us. He is perfecting His own, touching them here and there, so as to help, preserve, chasten, or whatever it may be. What a solemn thing it is to belong to God, but what a wondrously *blessed* thing !

G. V. W.

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## OUR RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PRESENT DAY.

JOHN XVII. 11-26.

I HAVE read this Scripture that, in considering it, we may look a little at what really becomes us in the last days.

Let me first say a word as to the church, the body of Christ. It is "the mystery" of which Paul tells us in the Ephesians; it is the secret of God which could not be divulged until after the rejection of Christ from the earth. When the Lord said to His disciples that He would build a new structure, His church, there was nothing in that about the body. It would have been premature to have spoken of it before His rejection. And even immediately on His ascension we get nothing as to it. In Acts i. the disciples are distinctly told *not* to look up into heaven, where the Head of the body was gone. It is only when we get to chapter vii., when the nation has rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven to witness to an ascended and glorified Christ, that we find a man led by the Spirit to look up there, and who sees, as he does so, Jesus in the glory of God. It is after that He says to Saul of Tarsus, "Why persecutest

thou *me*?" The truth comes out that He regards the saints here as Himself.

Satan brought all his forces to bear against the Lord Jesus when He was here; his one object was to remove the Son of God from the scene. It was not now merely the sin of the garden of Eden; it was not simple disobedience; there was now no cloke for man's sin; the Son of God had come down to earth, and done among men works which none other had done, and they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father. The most marvellous expression of God's counsels, Satan has been always most unwearied in opposing.

But after the Son of God was thus rejected by man and taken up into heaven, there came out this secret that His body was still upon earth to represent Him. What, through the dark ages? Yes, then just as truly as in the present moment. Souls do not believe it. They do not believe that united by this bond they are as close to a brother in Australia as to one in their own town in England. Of course I am not so *responsible* for the brother at a distance as the one beside me; so in Romans and Ephesians a brother is called a "*neighbour*"—"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour,"—"speak every man truth with his neighbour." But we are all brought into this new bond, "members one of another," a bond which overrides every other; and I will add, that

I never saw a man defective in the higher bond who was not also defective in the lower ones.

Though the expression of this wonderful body has so failed in the hands of man, yet in the mind of the Lord, in the heart of the Lord, it is as bright as ever. And each one of us individually has to do with it; we each have to do with the testimony here on earth; we each have our duty connected with it. If one only sits down to think a little; to say to oneself, *I am a member of Christ!* what a marvellous thing! I hear people speak of the future, but, for myself, I have never yet been able to grasp the *present*. Besides which, I get the light of the future to bear on the present, "while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

I have said thus much as to the body, to show that it exists always as a perfect and complete whole, while we own the disorder. Each is bound to avail himself of the resources which are in Christ unto the end, and, as he does, he is an example and help to all the rest, for he can never lose sight of the body.

We have all been brought up in the ecclesiastical idea of a great profession. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth," as we read in Timothy. It has kept the Bible for us, and

even *that* it has not done over well. And these Scriptures which have been thus kept for us are what we have to turn back to in "perilous times," which, I suppose, none of us doubt we are now in. Paul says to Timothy, you have the *Scriptures*, and they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

I have, then, turned to this chapter in John, not to interpret it, but to get a few thoughts from it in connection with our present resources and responsibility. I find here, that I have Christ's heart, and that it remains unchanged whatever the state of things may be in the church. Thank God, on this side it is as bright to-day as it ever was! There is this wonderful thing in Scripture that, as you are in communion and read it, you can actually feel yourself in company with the Lord, and hear Him speak; you can say, I have heard His *words*. John's Gospel and the Epistles to Timothy are just what are attacked by the enemy in the present day, because they are the very Scriptures suited to help us in it. The Gospel was written after 2 Timothy.

In this chapter His disciples are overhearing Him pray to His Father. He, as it were, says to them: I will let you hear me speak of you to my Father; just as a mother sometimes lets her child hear her pray for it. I feel that we do not

pray enough for the saints. We speak too much of Ephesian truth, but we do not pray enough that souls may understand it and get hold of it. There is not enough of Paul's way: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." What makes an evangelist so interesting is that he is the communicator of light for the first time to a dark soul, but souls need light communicated to them after that: *saints* need light.

But my present thought is our responsibility, and what characterises it in the present days.

And first, what are the resources or the provisions that are made and ready for us? I run down the chapter, part of which we have read, and I find four things which are *given*: "Life eternal;" "The words;" "Thy word;" and "The glory." Next what He has done or is doing: "My joy fulfilled in them;" and the Father's love. These are still our portion. And then come His desires: that they should be kept from the evil of the world; that they should be sanctified; and "that they may be *one*, even as we are one; I in them and thou in me, that we may be made perfect in one." This is His chief desire. There is no such thing as isolation here; it is not a unit that is spoken of; it is "they" and "them." It is not Elijah: "They have forsaken thy cove-

nant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword ; and I, even I only, am left." No such thing. Even then the answer of God is : " Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal." I have thus partially enumerated our resources, and turn now to the consideration of what should characterise us.

I find, as stated, that there are three characteristics which are to mark us as answering to the Lord's desires :

1. To be separate from the world.
2. To be sanctified.
3. To be one.

In this chapter we do not get any service properly so called ; we are set here as representing Christ ; it is the representative character. The true thought in the word " charity " is that of one ready to serve. There are four grades in service : they are the lover, the witness, the servant, and the soldier. If you lose the first of these you lose all the energy of service.

It may be asked what is the practical use of the body ? I answer, the house was always in existence from the time that redemption came in. We find the delivered people rejoicing on the other side of the Red Sea, and singing, " The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation ; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation." And the apostle

speaks to Timothy of behaving himself in the house of God. But I am only the more careful to do my duty, if I know myself united to the glorified Head in heaven, a member "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Every step that we get in truth it adds to the foundation; so knowing this wondrous truth, I do not dwell upon the fact that I am *saved*, blessed though it be, but rather that I am set in His body, and that He has "loved me and given himself for me." And thus loving Him because He has first loved me, I find that the first qualification for service is that of being a lover.

The second is a witness. The witness is one who is really *maintaining* the truth in his life. You cannot be the third, the servant, unless you are these two, for the true servant must be a witness. And, lastly, if you are a servant you are sure to be a soldier. To this I shall allude presently.

Now the great aim of the faithful is unity. But separation from the world and sanctification cannot be overlooked. You say, "Oh, how little we agree!" I answer, The more sanctified we are, the more agreement we shall have. Everything here turns on the word "holy." It is the "*holy* Father" who keeps His people, it is the *Holy* Ghost who is their Comforter. If you are defective in holiness you are defective in everything. Take the case of a man in a wrong partnership;

he may not feel the evil of it himself, but all the same that man is not walking in holiness; he is not led by the Spirit of God. He may say, I do not see any harm in it myself; I am going on with a quiet conscience; and so he may be, but the Holy Ghost is not going on with him. He is not what we read of in Luke: "The whole body full of light, having no part dark."

Therefore to your objection, "We have not *oneness*," I answer, Well, then let us have all the more of the other characteristics, let us be *sanctified*; thus also shall we increase in unity.

The Lord says: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

I turn for a moment to this passage. I understand by it that there are two things which sanctify us. One, "*the truth*." This puts us into a new origin altogether. So much so, that I can say to a believer, You are not in Adam; you are not of this race now; you do not belong to this world; you are in a new condition. The second thing is, that the One to whom the believer belongs, and on whom his heart is set, is



nowhere in this world; He has "*sanctified*" Himself, has gone away from it, so that positionally I am out of it. Seeing this is an immense help to us as we go on our way.

Let us see now what characterises the faithful in an evil day all through Scripture.

It is maintaining what was the great characteristic of the original thing, that which marked it when it was in order. The remnant properly is not the fag end of the thing. It is part of the original thing, but it is not a faded bit; it is a bit that shews the original nature of it. As we might say of a regiment much cut up, It has not lost its colours. An officer has been known to strip the colours off the pole and thrust them into his breast, denoting, You must take my life, before you can deprive me of the colours!

Now the question for us is, What *are* the colours? And before answering it I will say that those who are carrying them are getting brighter and brighter, though I do not say that they go on without interruptions.

What, then, are the colours? They have varied in character with the times according to the call of God. An Enoch stood for them as he "walked with God" three hundred years, until "he was not, for God took him." So did an Abram as he left his "country, and kindred, and father's house," to go to a land that God would shew

him, and then sojourned in that land a stranger "dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob." Joseph, too, when he came to die, said, "God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham; . . . and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." *There* was a remnant. That is what I call the colours. I shall come presently to what are *our* colours, which of course are not the same thing.

But it is said, Why contend at all? what is the use of contention? "Discretion is the better part of valour." Is not such discretion of value in the church? why contend about things? I answer, No. If we enjoy the resources which are in Christ, we shall be opposed, and we must contend for them; but with these resources, as I have glanced at them, we are well off.

I pass on to 1 Samuel vii. I lay great stress on this chapter because it is distinctive of a period that answers to ours. Samuel's colours are very much what ours are; the period when he was the remnant finds its parallel in our day.

How different the state of Israel in Samuel's time to what it was in the time of Joshua! What power there was in the way the ark went round the city of Jericho and the walls fell down flat! Such was the power of that day—a power that was invisible. It was a moment when what they were aiming at seemed impossible, as it has done many a time since; a moment such as

many of us have doubtless seen, when there was no way out, and everything seemed hopeless. And then what happened? As at Jericho, God's hand came in, and the walls fell down flat.

But then in the moment of success one individual takes a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and hides them under his tent, and God cannot go on with the people. It is wonderful how much harm one man can do. In Achan the innate corruption of the race broke out. I say "of the race," because we find that the door of escape opened for Israel in the latter day is this very valley of Achor where Achan was stoned.

In a time of difficulty men of faith will get the sense of what should be done to meet it. They get light from God at the moment that it is needed, and in the power of it go forth like a forlorn hope to meet the enemy. I say a forlorn hope, though I do not think the simile a perfect one, for in this case, the forlorn hope is *sure* to win. I never see a man who is set for victory in God's things but he is sure to win. It is one of the characteristics of Philadelphia: "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Here Samuel and the people were in the right standing; they were in the land; but the Philistines came in and interfered with them. You ask, Who are the Philistines now? I answer, I do not know; but this much I see, that they

are intruders amongst God's people who hinder them on the very ground of testimony, a direct evil influence.

The first thing, then, that the remnant must have is *holiness*. I repeat, we *must* have *separation*. We must if we are coming to pray; we must be able to lift up "*holy hands*." We positively come to God sometimes as if He did not see what we were about. It is a great blessing and a great happiness to see the ground God has set us on. It is that of separation from evil; that is the first characteristic, as we have seen. Samuel says to the people: "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only."

And the next thing is *dependence*: he says, "I will *pray* for you unto the Lord."

Then thirdly comes defending: "The Philistines drew near to battle against Israel." You ask, Do you like fighting? No, I say, I do not; but the most timid animal makes a great fighter when what is most dear to it is assailed. See a hen when a dog attacks her chickens, how she will defend them! And why? Because there is *love* there. It is the greatest lover who makes the best defender.

So I say, separation, dependence, defending, and success mark the remnant.

In Luke ii. we find another picture of the

remnant. I find two people here who mark the remnant when the Lord first comes into the temple; Simeon sets forth one aspect of it, and Anna the other. To the one it was revealed that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ," and the other "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day." Thus we get in the two the remnant adhering to the thing that marked the period.

And the Lord Jesus is found in the same path; He goes into the temple and drives out thence the sheep and the oxen and the changers of money, saying, "Make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." He says, I must look after the temple—after what belongs to God upon earth. And this is just what characterises the remnant: it always adheres to what belongs to God upon earth.

Then, when the Lord goes out of the temple for the last time, "he saw a certain poor widow, casting into the treasury two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living she had." The poor widow gives all that she has for God's interests here; for what belongs to Him on the earth.

Now let us turn to the second Epistle to

Timothy to see how the remnant comes out in the present day.

I believe a great defect in our thoughts of the remnant lies in the fact that we do not take into consideration what the original thing was. We shall never understand the characteristics of the remnant if we do not see clearly what the church was at the first. Do not think that I mean we shall have the original thing back again; I do not; but I do say that we must return to beginnings.

In 2 Timothy I find that the church has got into a very corrupt state. Corruption has come into the house. And finding things thus in such corruption, the duty of faithful ones purging themselves from it comes out. "If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The word "purge" only occurs twice in Scripture: once in this passage; the other in 1 Corinthians v. There it consists in purging out of leaven from the assembly; here, in purging out yourself. It is interesting to see the word only occurs twice; little things of this sort help us in the understanding of God's word.

Now what calls for this purging out of the individual? For myself I do not see at present that I should ever separate from a meeting on account of *leaven*; but when the *maintenance* of the leaven is insisted on, then it becomes

*canker* and must be separated from. Canker can be kept out of companies gathered on the ground of the church of God, and if any such refuse to purge out the *evil*, then one must purge out *oneself*, for they cease to be on that ground. But I maintain that the place I am in is God's house, and because I believe in the presence of the Holy Ghost in it, I do not suffer a bit of evil in the house.

And, in thus caring for the holiness of it, I shall not find myself in a place of isolation ; I shall never be without company. This is an immense comfort. The Lord has not left the house. So here the apostle does not say to Timothy, You are all alone, there is no one left so good as you are ; no, but there are others who "call on the Lord out of a pure heart," and you must "follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace" with them, and thus help the whole church of God.

Now what are our "colours" ?

The first thing that Christendom did was to give up the colours. Rome deputed a man to represent Christ on the earth, whilst Christ had sent the Holy Ghost from the Father to testify of Himself through His body, the church. So numbers who instinctively seek Christ's rule on earth, and do not know where to find it, go over to Romanism, and are deceived by this counterfeit. On the other hand, Protestantism has rejected the wrong one, but has not apprehended the right

One ; and many who have accepted as a fact the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, make infidels of themselves in not acting up to what they believe. Do you think if I really believed the Holy Ghost were here, I should not look to Him instead of to human means of one kind and another in preaching the gospel, for instance ? How could I accept Revivalism if I believed in the presence of the Holy Ghost ? How could I trust to boards outside preaching rooms to bring in hearers, instead of to His leading ?

You may answer, But the Holy Ghost is here to *comfort* us during the absence of Christ ; very true, He is here sent by the Father in the name of Christ to be the Comforter of His people, which we see in chapter xiv. 26 ; but in chapter xv. 26 He is sent *from the Father*, expressly for the testimony ; we read, “ He shall testify of me.” And again, in chapter xvi. 14, “ He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

I say, then, that the colours and the responsibility of the remnant is, that the Holy Ghost is here to maintain for Christ. But, even amongst those who believe it as an article of faith, there is such looseness in carrying it into practice, that the consequence is, numbers are found on the ground of the remnant who are there with very little conscience as to their position.

As to evangelizing, I believe the real thing, that which is most owned of God, is to go from



house to house. It might be more laborious, but it would certainly be more effective. Of course there is the public thing as well, that is proclamation, and I wish there were more of it. But I insist upon the presence of the Holy Ghost in carrying it out.

I now turn for another thing that characterises the remnant, to a passage that is in the mouth of you all: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst." Remark they are to be "*gathered*." Each one must be led to His name by the Holy Ghost—must be *gathered*; and that to the name of *Christ*. We have to learn what a real thing His presence is in our midst. Do you think if people really knew the Lord were there, that they would give out any hymn that was merely in their mind? I am sure I speak timidly on such a subject, but I always ask Him if He would like me to give out such a one, and, if He does not countenance me, I do not.

It is one of the defects of brethren that they think they know everything, but I believe that very little is known of the Lord's presence in the midst of His gathered ones. When we are around Him it is not a question of what ministry there will be, of what I shall hear, but of whether the Lord Himself will speak to me. There is an old adage that "a crooked loaf will feed a man." We have accepted the fact that Christ *is* in the midst

of His church, and I do not know any greater favour that God has ever shewn me than that of bringing me into His place upon earth ; but as in the days of Nehemiah, "there is much rubbish" with the truth we have. As our Epistle tells us, we are in "perilous times," and there is no apostle for perilous times. The second Epistle of Peter, and Jude, give us descriptions of these same times ; but there is always left to us "the holy scriptures," which are sufficient to make "the man of God perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

But whilst, on the one hand, God has provided power for His people even in "perilous times," there are those who, like Jannes and Jambres, in the days of Moses, withstand the truth by *imitating* power. A person once, speaking of the lawfulness of any means to reach souls, asked me, "Do you not think it is right to weep in preaching the gospel?" "Never," I answered, "if it is to make *others* weep." And this imitation never succeeds in reaching the real thing ; when it came to be a question of life, the magicians had to stop.

Now in this third chapter we find a different thing to what is in the second. There it is purging oneself from evil which has become canker. And saints generally have stopped at the end of that chapter without going on to the third and fourth. A state of things comes in amongst those

who have purged themselves in which the apostle says, "reprove, rebuke, exhort." The first five verses of chapter iv. are his words to us. I am sure I do not say it valiantly, but still I am convinced that it has now come to what Moses said to Levi, "Who is on the Lord's side? Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour." It is not that what has gone before in the previous part of the Epistle is to be neglected, it is not that you are not to separate from evil when it has assumed the character spoken of by the apostle, but that you are also to cleave fast to God's word, and to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine." If I find a person ignorant, I am to teach him with all patience.

One word in conclusion. What is my present gain if I, in a moral condition, fight God's battles—stand for Christ's interests here on earth? I *might* enjoy God's mercies, I *might* go down on my knees to the water like Gideon's soldiers. They were fearless men though they did it, and I am fearless too; why should I not enjoy what I find of His mercies in my path? Simply because I will not turn aside to anything, however lawful, that may distract me from my one object—standing for Him here where He is not.

And, meanwhile, in all the conflict, I know the

heart of the One I am standing for ; I have that infallible comfort, *Christ's "joy."* Are you turning aside ? Are you looking for something to amuse you by the way ? Some pleasant book it may be, no matter what. I know as well as any what a little thing can turn the soul aside, and "A burnt child dreads the fire." But if I am to take the place of the lover, there must be no turning aside ; there must be the character suited to it.

There never was such a time as this, never such opportunities for giving up for Christ. You need not talk to me of what you have given up, for it is more than made up to you ; it is sure to be "manifold more in this present time." But we need the warning. How many a fearless man is turned aside by a mercy here ! Satan says, Here is a nice little spring ; stop to have a drink at it. There is always such danger in a novelty. A thing you possess is not nearly so dangerous to you as the offer of one you have not, but desire. Give it up for Christ and there will be "manifold more" for you. Oh, we little think of the honour there is in standing a valiant one for Christ ! People think the honour and glory are all coming by-and-by. I say it is *now* ! "The Spirit of glory and of God *resteth* upon you." Do you say, It is not a *reality* ? I answer, That is your own fault ; it is you who have not suffered. Look at Abraham after the victory. Melchisedec, the

priest of the most high God, comes out to meet him and to bless him. Lot never met Melchisedec that I know of.

The Lord grant that our hearts may be so enlarged by the knowledge of His heart up there, that we may be persuaded that there is no greater joy than that of being allowed to stand for His name in this world, and thus going on in company with His heart, and in association with those who follow Him here. If all saints, all the church, are not on our hearts, we are defective. No member is really helpful who forgets the body. But, at the same time, the best way to help others is by being faithful ourselves. Barnabas could say: I own you helped me, Paul; I was offended with you at the time, but I have come back again, for I see that you were valiant for the truth, which I was not.

Give up for the Lord; be valiant for the truth; and what I have said will be yours: "manifold more in this present time."

(J. B. S.)

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## FRAGMENT.

IN the fifteenth of John and the chapters connected with it, we get, not the sovereignty of grace towards us, but our responsibility and blessing as we walk in it. The Lord is looking for our walk as disciples consequent upon our position as clean through His word.

He has put us in a certain position in which, through grace, we are to glorify Him. It is not here: "We love him because he first loved us;" but "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father." He puts us in the place of favour, and of consequent responsibility; but it is not that there is any doubt, for He adds, "As I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." In His own path, where He enjoyed His Father's love, He had always unbounded joy, and it was a path of undivided obedience, and we should walk so as to have Christ's joy fulfilled in us.

In "the vine" He is looking at Himself *on earth*. Of course I have unclouded joy belonging to my place in heaven; that is another thing; when looked at in Christ in heavenly places, we are simply perfect. But it is *on earth* that He would have His joy abide in us, and that our joy might

be full. All through He puts our responsibility first. It is "abide in me," not "I will abide in you." He calls on us to abide in Him *that* He may abide in us.

It is not a question of safety, or of God's keeping them to the end, it is entirely one of fruit-bearing. We are called in the active reverence of our hearts to stay continually with Christ, to abide in Him, to be constantly drawing from Him in active diligence of heart. The "I in you" is consequent on our abiding in Him. That we should bring forth much fruit is what He is thinking of, and He presses it upon us, that we can produce nothing without direct supplies from Himself. But abiding in Him (ver. 14), I get guidance of heart, and the words of Christ direct all my thoughts.

(J. N. D.)

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In prayer, it is not the lip it comes from, but the ear it goes to, that is the great thing.

(G. V. W.)

## “PART WITH ME.”

OR,

COMMUNION, TESTIMONY, AND SERVICE.\*

AN attentive reader of the Scriptures, under the “unction” and “anointing” of which they speak (much more every such worshipping soul, conversant with the Person of our blessed Lord) must have been often detained by certain parts in the Gospel and Epistles of John, and of the Apocalypse too, which reveal to us the intimacies that existed between Christ and the beloved disciple.

I suppose all such would turn with one accord to John xiii., and the following chapters, in proof of the nature and character of the divine “fellowship, with the Father and with his Son,” in which real christian communion consists. In its blessed outflow too, whether by its holiness and perfectness, or its mutuality, what words, yea, what facts, could so express all these to us, as *this* one: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved”? It can be only in the knowledge of such a love (in the Father, and in the Son) and in the consciousness that we are the objects and subjects of this very love, that we could feel either happy, or at home in “the

\* Sequel to “The Elect of God,” &c. p. 1, vol. vi.



manner of the Father's love," or with confidence lean our heads on Jesus' breast, in the enjoyment of His own unfathomable grace to us, and of His delight to have us there.

Nor is this all ; for while there must needs be happy feelings, as we have said, and confidence on our part, yet we taste likewise (and *this* is what the love of the bosom carries us out into) the delight and love of the Father to the Son.

He was in the beginning with God, and eternally His delight, even as Jesus said : "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them."

Besides all the Father's love to us, and the Son's love, and the love of the Spirit, unsearchable as *this* is, because infinite, there lay outside and beyond ourselves, in its own eternal height and depth, this untold love : "The Father loveth the Son." Moreover, the Son Himself was "the only begotten One in the bosom of the Father," and it was this love which He alone knew, and of which He was the sole object, that He came to declare, because He who lay there knew it as His own. It was out of this springing-well in the bosom of the Father that the water of life flowed ; and side by side with this, there was His own sweet love as *Jesus*, wherewith He loves us "unto the end."

When we are free enough to rest in the bosom of the Lord, as our own proper place, and know the riches of the Father's grace, we shall then

begin to taste in communion with Christ (as John did) the higher ranges of the Father's delight in His Son, and the Son's delight in the Father.

Words that are inexplicable in any other connection, and upon any other level, will find their place in this group of chapters from John xiii. to xvii. Take as an instance: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." It is into this circle of eternal glory, and of divine love, we are introduced in communion by the Holy Ghost, as between God alone in all that "He is," and the Son of man, who when in this world could say, that God had been glorified in Him; and, as a blessed result, and growing out of this, "God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."

The Son of man's glory, by means of death, and the accompanying fact, that God is glorified in Him, lay not only in the outward sphere of this world and Satan's power, or in that which was dispensational with Israel and the nations, or in what was governmental, as between Adam and creation, on account of sin; but took up also the two irreconcilable extremes of sin in the flesh, our flesh, and the nature and being of God, in His own essential holiness and majesty.

So likewise, "God shall also glorify him in

himself," is not only by an investiture of his acquired rights and titles, as "Son of man" on earth, or in heaven; but beyond all that was official, whether below or above, and that was relative to mankind; for in any and every stage or condition, there lay what was, and is, personally His with God, and consists in what God *is*, and in who and what the Son of man *is*. Therefore we read: "God shall also glorify him *in* himself," for it was in and by this very Son of man, that God Himself had been glorified in His own intrinsic perfections, and in all His divine attributes. The prayer of John xvii. springs out of this eternal counsel of peace; "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Moreover, this desire is founded on the attendant fact, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Such was the blessed One who formed the centre of this marvellous group of chapters in John's Gospel, which give to us the diameter and meaning of "part with me" in our communion and service. It is into this circle of the Father's delight in His Son, and of the Son's delight in the Father's love, we are led under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, as the witnesses and sharers of Christ's joy, and in felt satisfaction and rest of soul in being there, where He dwells.

"Now there was lying on Jesus' breast, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved;" and the bosom was open to any other as freely as to John. Besides this, and to perfect "His own" for it, Jesus said to another, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" and this was likewise common to them all. It is the grace and activity of the Lord's love in washing our feet, as well as the confidence and rest of heart we feel, when He lays our heads upon His bosom, which make Jesus doubly precious to us, by what He is, and in what He stoops to do. Indeed these exercises of the grace of Christ over us, are our necessary and constituent qualifications for communion and enjoyment in this unfathomable love and divine fellowship, as having part with Him in what He has ascended up into with the Father. And it is this which the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, has come down to declare to us, and connect us with on high, and with Jesus too, while we are below. His one great desire that we should have part with Him where He is gone, is thus formed, established, communicated and enjoyed in the Spirit, with the Father. "God is faithful, who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son."

The other half of this mysterious oneness of "part with me," in its actual and vital communion, was revealed when one of His disciples asked: "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and

said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Thus, this unmanifested circle of our fellowship, in life, through the Spirit, "with the Father and the Son," is complete and perfect in all its parts, and, though unseen, is vital, and actual, and real. Yea, though not seen, or manifested, or understood by the natural senses, because it is spiritual, yet it becomes more wonderful on that very account, and lies far beyond all that the eye ever saw, or that the ear ever heard, or that even entered into the heart of man to conceive.

"If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him," is become a realised fact in the Person of the Son of man at the right hand of God.

Besides this personal glory with the Father and God, Jesus said to "His own" when leaving them, "All things that the Father hath are mine;" and revealed the great mission and work of the Holy Ghost, "He shall take of *mine*, and shall shew it unto you." Moreover, as regards our competency to comprehend and enjoy these things, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;" and, marvellous fact, "We have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Objects of the Father's love, and of

the Son's delight, we have part with Christ in all that He has now entered into, both in title and in fact, though not yet manifested. It is through this loving ministration by "the Spirit which dwelleth in us," as well as through the living grace of Christ (of which we have just spoken) that this marvellous intercourse is maintained by the Father and the Son, with a people who are in the world, and yet not of it, even as Christ was not of the world.

We are thus in Him, and He in us; we are one with Him where He is, and He has part with us where we are; even as Jesus said, "I will manifest myself to him," "and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is into this illimitable and blessed circle of divine and heavenly love, that we are introduced and established in the intelligence of life, by the Holy Ghost.

It is in the light where God dwells that we dwell, as new creatures in Christ, and into which nothing can enter that deceiveth or worketh an abomination, or maketh a lie.

How in keeping with the purity of this communion, and in correspondence with its exclusiveness too, was John's bold question at the supper table! In the presence of the traitor, "he then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it? Which is he that betrayeth thee?" One with his Lord by every affection of his heart, in

sweet communion when on the bosom, and drawing from thence every heaven-born motive for testimony or service, how natural was it, that this should make him swifter of foot even, than any other of the disciples, when his Lord's resurrection out of the grave was a question to be settled; or quicker of eye too than all the rest, when, on that eventful morrow, He shewed Himself again to the disciples, at the sea of Tiberias; for it was "the disciple whom Jesus loved" that said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

The bosom of Jesus is thus the birthplace of divine affections for fellowship with the Father and the Son in light; for a love that, in its own integrity, can boldly say, "Who is it?" for swiftness of foot that identifies John with a risen Christ upon the earth; and for quickness of eye that recognised Jesus as the Lord of the seas. As the Lord of all below, He then crowned the disappointment and toil of the fishermen by night, with a plentiful supply on that morrow (typical of a still future day) when they were not able to draw the net to shore for the multitude of fishes. In His love He has thus part with them in every work and service present and to come.

But beyond this, and for deeper reasons too, the constraining love of Christ, or the motives of the breast, must be demanded, and would be found alone adequate, for the patient endurance of "the afflictions of the gospel" in Christ's service

- and testimony upon the earth, after Jesus had ascended "up where he was before." Indeed, the words, "If I will that he *tarry* till I come," seem to be only a prolongation of that night of fishing, for which the sea of Tiberias had prepared them. They tarried really for the Lord of the heavens, and the earth, and the seas, till they had a transfer from their empty nets at the dawn of the morning, by the coming of Jesus to fill them with great fish, "a hundred and fifty and three." He will thus begin His millennial intimacies with them, and fill the whole world with the glory of God. If I will that ye "tarry till I come," was true, in fact, during the night upon the sea of Tiberias, till Jesus appeared to them in the brightness of the morning; and is likewise dispensationally true of this church period, during the darker night of Christ's absence from the world, and from "the fishers of men" till He come for us.
- The Lord's rejection, and His departure out of this world to the Father, together with the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the calling out of the church, as the body and bride of Christ, form "the mystery which was hid in God, from ages and generations," but is now revealed to "His own," and embodied in these central chapters of John, which we are considering. It is obvious that the relations and fellowship with the Father and the Son, which these and other writings unfold *to us*, who are one with the Head in



heaven, are peculiar to the children of this "little while;" and cannot apply to any of the elect of God, who have preceded us upon the earth; or who may follow us, when the church is caught up to meet the Lord, and, when the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride hath made herself ready. What a portion is ours!

Associated thus and having part with a rejected and absent Christ in heaven, and not with a present and triumphant Lord on His throne of government on the earth, everything connected with us as "His own" takes the character of patience and suffering. Therefore Jesus speaks to Peter of the death whereby he should have "part with me," and "glorify God," reaching glory by sufferings like his Lord. So also of John's pathway: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." Faithful in this testimony to Christ, and to this fellowship with the Father and the Son in light and love, the beloved disciple exposes every adverse power that either threatens or denies it.

He writes therefore to "fathers, young men, and children," warning them of the Antichrist and the false spirits that are gone out into the world, adding: "Ye are of God, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The bosom where John lay, and its motives and constraining love, led him to be as bold as a lion, in this testimony to

the Lord whether in his Epistles, or the Apocalypse. There was no other standard or test for him, but "the name of Jesus," whether for light and darkness, or good and evil; and, measured by this standard, he decides the one and the other without reserve: "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one."

It is blessed to witness how this communion and testimony in "the disciple whom Jesus loved," are consistent and like each other; the height to which love elevated him in fellowship and joy, is equalled by the depth to which faithfulness in testimony carried him, as an outlaw or a victim in this world. And where was this? Hear what He says: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Little did they understand at first, what it was to have part with Him, either as to the Father's house on high, or the isle of Patmos below, for companionship in tribulations; much less "to drink of the cup that he drank of;" but this was before them too!

John had been on the breast at the supper table, as the disciple whom Jesus loved; he had been "breathed upon" by the risen Lord, and had thus received a power of life, that drew him into deeper communion with and service for Christ.

Other and heavenly relations had been formed and disclosed to him, by the ascending One, about to depart to "my Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." This was *his* portion with the Lord.

After this, John joined the others upon the sea of Tiberias, to learn, it may be, the prophetic lesson of Israel and the Gentiles, during their night of toil and disappointment, without a Christ to direct them, and the happy converse "when the morning was come," and He joined them in their service, to guide and fill their nets with great fishes. It is written of Zion, in the day of the Lord's millennial kingdom and glory, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."

But beyond these personal, and relative, and dispensational associations with the Lord, there yet remained a further and very different one, which the Apocalypse declares to us from "the throne set in heaven." "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel, unto his servant John." As having part with Him, and bearing "record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw," the beloved disciple was necessarily a suffering witness "in the isle that is called Patmos."

Still, as one with Christ, whilst Christ was on high, John "was in the Spirit, on the Lord's day," and though not like Paul ("whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell") yet does he seem to be in his measure beyond mere time, and nature too, when "he heard behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet."

With this revelation "which God gave unto Jesus Christ," the appearance and revelation of the Lord's own person to John, must necessarily correspond; but what a change this involved, in one and the other! "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot," &c. What corresponding change can pass upon this beloved disciple? Nothing can agree with the appearance of Him, whose "eyes were as a flame of fire," and out of whose mouth went "a sharp two-edged sword," but that which actually took place: "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

Do we comprehend these different relations, of "communion, and testimony, and service" in suffering, which marked the life and pathway of the Lord, and ours, as having part with Him above and below?

In the Apocalypse, one need scarcely say, it is *not* fellowship, and oneness with the Father and

the Son, as in the Gospel and the first Epistle, but quite otherwise: it is "the Revelation which God gave unto Jesus Christ." Nor is the nearness that of the beloved disciple leaning on the breast, but, on the contrary, the distance and reserve of the angel; and the prophecies of the Book, which were handed to him. In short, it is neither the disciple whom Jesus loved, in the *communion* of the bosom at the supper, nor is it John in *testimony*, as "your brother and companion in tribulation" at Patmos, for the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, and "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." It is the Son of man, and His servant John, in man's day, and the still future day of this world's Antichrist, as written in "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants, things which must shortly come to pass."

Diverse as these relations and positions and their experiences were to John, yet each of them, and all, were necessary for part with Him, who is the Alpha and Omega, "the faithful and true witness."

As Jesus, in His marvellous service was never separated from the Father's bosom, and could always say of Himself, "the Son of man which is in heaven," so John's qualifications, and ours, for these varied employments of communion, or testimony, or service, must ever be connected with the head upon Jesus' breast, and spring

from the fulness of love which dwells there. It was this constraining love of Christ which led him out into the suffering testimony of Patmos, but only to be "in the Spirit;" and as to days and times and seasons, to be characteristically in "the Lord's day." In the truth and power of all *this*, he perfects his knowledge of the Father and the Son, by "this Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him;" and adds, to what he learnt at Bethany and Patmos, this appearance of the Lord as "Son of man," at whose feet he cast himself as dead!

Positionally and relatively, as perfect in one experience as the other; indeed, the head on the breast for fellowship in love, or in the Spirit on the Lord's day for testimony, or in falling at the feet of "the Son of man" as dead, only declare and combine the resources and exercises which belong to us, as sons of the Father and witnesses for Christ, in "the kingdom and patience."

Another presentation of "the Son of man," was yet made to His servant John, as requisite as either of the former; for if "eyes as a flame of fire, and a sharp two-edged sword in his mouth," put the sentence of death upon the disciple who lay in the bosom, and led him to fall at His feet as actually dead, "the Son of man" would, on His part, lay His right hand upon John, and say unto him, "Fear not." Nor was this all, for He made Himself known in a new way, as clad in resurrec-

tion titles, saying: "I am the first and the last, I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell, and of death." One with his Lord, by the "right hand" on his shoulder, and associated with Him on the other side of death, in the power of that life, which was victorious over sin and death and hell, the servant could take this new place, as "a brother and companion in tribulation."

Otherwise, how could he (save under this three-fold cord) accompany the Son of man into these Apocalyptic visions, as well as bear record of the betrayal at the supper table, yea, the declension and the departure and breakdown of all the disciples (and his own) at the judgment-hall? How speak of the apostasy of the entire dispensation at last, together with the failure of these "seven golden candlesticks," as inspected and judged by Him, who walked through their midst? How could John, otherwise, be a witness to these seven churches of what he saw, or bear record of the Book from the throne, sealed with seven seals, or how declare the mystery of these seven seals, which opened themselves out in the seven trumpets, and the seven thunders, and the seven vials, which emptied themselves out upon the earth? What would even the right hand of power and strength upon the shoulder be against the evil, if apart from the head lying in peaceful rest on Jesus' breast? Or how accept "the book

of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him," unless held thus in closest connection with the words of the Father's love and counsels, which the Son of the bosom had given forth to "His own," as one with Himself and having part in all the Father's counsels of glory?

May the Lord give us, in these last days, to realise the sufficiency of all that the loved disciple started with from the beginning, and thus learn upon the bosom the unfailing love which draws us to itself in full communion, or else, as He breathes upon us, as "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," for closer enjoyments in new relations with His Father, and ours. Nothing except what is vital in us, and is realised in the grace of Christ, will be of any avail in carrying us forward by patience and testimony "in the Spirit, on the Lord's day:" or lastly for association with "the Son of man" by the right hand of His might, amidst the decline and ruin of "the seven golden candlesticks;" and in service for God, by testimony against the final blasphemy of the world, where the dragon has his seat and power.

"He then lying on Jesus' breast said, Which is he that betrayeth thee?" What a word, then and now! "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas. And after the sop, Satan entered into him." What contrasts and contradictions are these?



"He then, having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night." This long night continues, and deepens in darkness, all along the chapters of the Apocalypse, or the book of "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to shew unto his servants, things which must shortly come to pass." "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." "He that testifieth these things saith, Behold, I come quickly ; Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus !"

J. E. B.

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May the Lord give us earnest purpose of heart, that we may be ever near enough to Him to draw from Him the grace that we need to glorify Him.

(G. V. W.)

## ACCEPTANCE.\*

### 2 CORINTHIANS III.

I DESIRE in these lectures to go over very old ground, and look at the different stages in christian life. As the Psalmist says: "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces."

We begin with what the apostle taught the Corinthians, though in practice they did not answer to it. First we see where the soul is placed. There are two things brought together in this chapter: what the law was, and what Christ is. This is important, because people are often not clear of the law. I am sometimes struck with the standard a person has in his life and ways. The law is looked at as that which is the rule of life. The young man in Mark x. is considered an example of a very good life. But you must have one or the other; either the law, or Christ.

People try to make a compound of the two, but it is impossible; they are quite distinct. There has been the greatest moral revolution that

\* This and the ten following addresses are consecutive.

can possibly be conceived: the demands of the law came from glory; but, instead of drawing man, it repelled him. See Moses and the people in Exodus xxxiv. The revolution is, that now the glory, instead of repelling, attracts; it is the expression of God, the thing of all others that invites you, and forms you in correspondence with itself. The law was in the glory once; now there is a *Saviour* in the glory. It is a wonderful thing that, instead of demanding from us righteousness, there is a Saviour in that glory who met all demands. He has led us into the enjoyment of the Father's heart in that bright scene that suits Him; it is a complete revolution. The prodigal had only two places: a great way off, or in the Father's house. The thief on the cross was on the verge of divine judgment under the law, but he got that most wonderful step, "*To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"

You must connect your life as a Christian with the law or with Christ; there is no middle course. Being saved by the blood of Christ, I have the righteousness of God. But the thing that is now sought is what suits man, not what is according to the glory of God. Once we find out that God has placed us according to the desires of His own heart in divine glory, the glory becomes the measure of His grace. Why? Because God has carried out the desire

of His own heart, and that has placed me in a scene where there is nothing to check the full flow of His love. That is grace, and there is only law or grace. If a person has not got a good foundation there is no building on it, no going on; there is no progress but in keeping with glory; no formation, though there may be intelligence; no growth.

The apostle first shews how God has brought us into connection with the glory by our Lord Jesus Christ. The law in Exodus xx. was given from the glory too, but instead of drawing, it repelled. When Moses came down from the Mount the second time, his face shone, and they could not bear it, because the law was there. It was not *grace* yet, but God shewed all through His desire to connect His people with His *glory*. The house was filled with His glory, but man did not answer to it.

In Ezekiel they were so contrary to God that the glory departed. We read in the first chapter: "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." What does this point out? The glory was about to leave the scene because of the wickedness of Israel. But when the vision of its retiring was shewn to the prophet, there was a spot of amber in the midst of

it; and in that amber spot the figure of a *man*. God had spoken to man, and He desired to dwell with man. The pillar of the cloud shewed that; and here we find, in the brightest spot of the retiring glory, there is the figure of a man. Thus man drove away the glory, and it never came back to earth until Luke ii. 9, where we see it come to announce the fact that a Saviour is born which is Christ the Lord. The glory was connected with Christ's coming to the earth.

In chapter ix. 29 we get the close of the Lord's ministry on the earth. After thirty years of domestic life He entered on His public service; that public service culminates here; and glory salutes Him; the glory invites Him. There is not a word about *us* here. Peter says, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty." Here it says, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." They were afraid because death had not yet come in. Moses and Elias may be said to represent the law and the prophets, whilst Jesus was the one righteous Man who had met the *mind of God on earth* in everything. He had answered to all God's requirements of man; He had met all the mind of God in public and in private life, and glory salutes Him.

But now was to be fulfilled that wonderful word: "I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go out free." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone."

The meaning of this is, that, by dying, He produced a company of the same stock and order as Himself. "Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are *all of one*." One what? Put any noun in there and you spoil it. All of *one*; not one life, not one glory, but ONE; His own order. We read of brothers of Christ in the gospel narrative, but there were never any such, in its proper character, until He rose from the dead.

John xiii. presents to us the thing as effected: "Now is the Son of man glorified." A man is in the glory; He has gone in as the representative man. He came from heaven down here, He went up to the Mount of Transfiguration, and from thence to the cross, as a victim. He will not go out free. He came down from the mount of glory to bear the judgment of that man who did not do the mind of God in *any* thing; He went down to death and bore the judgment of sin; and "If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." He glorified God under our judgment, as well as in every single act of His daily life down here. God was glorified in Him, and "God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him." He was raised from the dead "by the glory of the Father."

I pass on to Acts vii., where Stephen sees the glory of God and Jesus. Ezekiel i. is fulfilled:

a Man is seen in the glory, and henceforth the glory, instead of terrifying, becomes the place that invites the heart. Saul finds a Saviour in the glory of God, and straightway he preaches Jesus, that He is the Son of God. Stephen is an example of a believer; Saul of an awakened sinner. Some may say, I do not know whether I have seen a Saviour in glory. I do not say that such a person is not converted, but I do say that he is not without fear, and "fear hath torment." If you have not seen Christ in glory, you have not learned divine righteousness; you are not suited to God. It is not a question of my conscience, but I get the sense that God is perfectly satisfied about me. We never get peace but in connection with righteousness. In the glory it is a ministration of righteousness. On my side it is peace; when the Lord rose from the dead He said, "Peace be unto you." There was not one disturbing thing left. It is "being justified by faith we have peace with God."

In Isaiah vi. we see a man before the Saviour was in glory. This great prophet is unfit for God's work because he is not free in the presence of God's glory. We see in chapter v. what a man he was; but he was unfit for the service which God had called him to, because he was not perfectly at rest in the presence of the glory of God. You may be very well versed in Scripture, and yet you

may not have found that you have a Saviour in the glory; that in the very brightest spot of God's glory there is most attraction for your heart, because your Saviour is there. Righteousness has looked *down* from heaven; peace and truth have kissed each other. Stephen saw his Saviour in glory. He does not tell the people what he saw; he says "the Son of man" to them, but He was the *Saviour* for himself. From the spot that fear came, relief came. One of the seraphim flew from the glory *down* to Isaiah (not from Isaiah up to God), having a live coal in his hand. There was no abatement of divine holiness, but still he could proclaim, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Where fear was evoked, there was generated relief. Then it is, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" "*Here am I*," (says Isaiah) "send *me*." See the effect! If you are not right up there, you cannot go for God down here.

We read, "As he is, so are we in this world." As He *is*, not as He *was*. He *was* on the cross; He is not there now. It *was* "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me," but *now* He is "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." Now as He is so are we. Is that in heaven? Not at all; "*in this world*." In the place where I *was* at a distance from God, failing in everything, love is perfected in me. Christ has so



met the judgment of God for me, that my soul gets the sense of being as fit for paradise as He is. The thief on the cross was fit for paradise. "Christ died the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

People may say, "That gospel is too high, it would not convert any one!" However it converted Paul. We have his conversion related three times. Once to the Jews, once to the Gentiles, and then typically. I have a terrible world to go through, and God desires me to know as I go through it that it is all bright up there. I have a Saviour in glory, and I belong to the scene where He is. What is the effect here? I am ready; send me. If the heart is not established in grace, you cannot go.

In the Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul goes back to what he had previously taught the saints in Corinth. Instead of the law, they had Christ written on their hearts. The treasure was in an earthen vessel. As in a standard rose-tree, the new graft is put into the old stem, so they had the rose graft; the apostle did not allow them to say they had not the graft; they *had* it; but they had not the rose, because they did not keep the stem in self-judgment. The young man in Mark x. judges of himself by his relation to man. If I have not God's idea about what I am, I shall never be able to form a right idea about anything. In Psalm lxxiii. when the Psalmist is outside the sanctuary,

he judges of everything in relation to himself; but when he gets inside, God eclipses everything.

When I have to do with glory, I myself am nowhere; I have to do, not with the law, but with Christ in glory. Then Christ is to come out. If I am true to that I shall not give way to self-indulgence. That Saviour in glory was the one who was written on the fleshy tables of their hearts, as the law was on the tables of stone. What an immense thing! You may say there is very little expression of it. True, but it remains a fact. You must get the thing before you can get the expression of it. The Lord's walk on earth was one of perfect beauty; He left manna on everything He touched; and I, now united to Him, am of a new order and lineage. I am the same man that I was; I have not got out of nature; but all the principles and springs of my action are different. I have the same natural duties that I had before, but now I am maintained by a different power. The wheel of a mill may be turned by water, and it will do, so long as there is the right supply; but if the water fails, the wheel stops. If the wheel be turned by steam, its working is not dependent on natural supply. So in grace. I have got a new power instead of nature, a power to conduct me according to the divine nature through all for God here on earth.

All through Scripture we see that when God

communicates anything to man, He repels the flesh. It was so with Moses, with Ezekiel, and with others. There must be nothing here to interfere with the divine action. "Old things are passed away; all things are of God." The reason there is so little growth is that there is so little association and occupation with Christ where He is. The glory invites now, instead of repelling, and the practical effect is, "changed into the same image."

May you retire into the secret of your heart and wait on God, and think that God's heart is so relieved of everything about you, that He sees you according to the Son at His right hand. Amidst all the confusion and contrariety of this scene I know how He feels about me. You might read the Bible through and through from morning till night, and yet not grow; growth never takes place but *in association with Christ Himself*. Look at the two disciples going to Emmaus. What a wonderful exposition of Scripture they had! It gave them light, but no more. But when they saw *Himself* there was *formation*; they were in concert with Him; they went the very same way He went: they returned to Jerusalem. You may read Scripture, and you may get light from it, but it does not take form and power unless by faith you see Him where He is; because glory not only attracts me, but it forms me.

Beloved friends, the Lord give to each one of

us the happy sense as we retire in private with Himself, that we have got a Saviour in the brightness of God's glory, to the delight of God's heart: and that we can find our home there. God delights in Him, He gave Him to bear the judgment of our sin; many accept Him as the scape-goat, and know that their sins are borne away to the land of forgetfulness, and that truly is a relief to the heart; but that is only what suits me. It is not that which brings me into union with God's heart about me. What God is thinking about is, that He has glorified the One who glorified Him; and I have got a Saviour at God's right hand. You may say, Oh, that is too high; I have got the first, and that is sufficient for me. I can only answer that, if you do say so, you are not thinking of what God rests in.

May we have a deepening sense of with what delight of heart we can look up and say, It is in the brightness of God's glory that I have a Saviour. He is before the Father there, and He looks at me in Him. The more I am occupied with Him there, the more I am fashioned as to what He was in walk and course down here; and thus characteristically I am like Him here.

(J. B. S.)

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## THE END OF MAN.

### 2 CORINTHIANS IV.

LAST evening we looked a little at the place in which God has set the believer in Christ. This evening I want to set forth what is the practical side of this.

We are entirely of a new stock, as we have already seen: "Both he that sanctifieth and they which are sanctified are all of one." It is not now God demanding righteousness from us, but righteousness is ministered from glory. God having found righteousness for us in Christ, a revolution has come in, righteousness is ministered from glory. The Son met everything according to God's mind; He has borne the judgment due to us, and glorified God, and God has raised Him from the dead, and now comes in a new thing: the ministration of the Spirit.

In these lectures I desire to go over the Christian's history. The first point of which is, that he is placed before God according to the beauty of Christ, and is, according to God's eye, as Christ; *nothing less*. Stephen was the fruit of Christ's accepted work; he was the answer to Psalm xxii.

There are three steps in what I call an infant

Christian. The first step is, I know that I am accepted in the Beloved. I want to know how God feels about me, and I *do* know that He delights in me because His Son has cleared away everything that was between Him and me, and has placed me in His own beauty before His eye to be conformed to the image of His Son. The second step is, the Holy Ghost has come down from the glorified Christ, and has united me to the One who has thus cleared all away. The third is, that I am to come back to this scene and not allow in myself one single thing for which Christ died. This is what the Corinthians were defective in.

As the cross has cleared away everything from the eye of God, you must practically go back to the cross, and not allow one single thing in the old stem; as we saw in our illustration of the standard rose. The graft is the pure work—Christ; the stem is the old thing—Adam. The graft commands all the resources that are in the briar, but gives it no credit at all. The cross must come on every bud of the briar, on every expression of the old thing. It must be “always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.”

We must distinguish between the carnal mind, and that nature which God at the beginning gave man. For instance; my eye is *nature*, and

is given me to be used ; but how am I going to use my eyesight ? Is it for Christ ? That is the question. We must not forget that while Christ is Head of the new creation He is also Creator of the old. So we read : " Commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And, " Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your *body* ;" the words, " and in your spirit," ought not to be there. The Corinthians were not setting aside the old man ; so the apostle presses on them the truth that another person is to be seen now ; the whole point is, not is a thing good, but is it *Christ* ? It is to be " Not I, but Christ liveth in me."

We shall see the different ways in which the flesh intrudes, and the different ways in which it is set aside. In Romans we get one way in which the flesh intrudes. Chapter vi. 6 shews how we get clear of it all. " Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The sins were all judged on the cross ; but more than that ; we get a statement in Genesis fulfilled in Christ, and which was never fulfilled till He came : " The end of all flesh is come before me." For a moment this was symbolised in the flood ; all was either covered or drowned ; but it never came out fully till Christ made an end of it on the cross.

In Romans v. there are two headships : Adam

and Christ. In chapter vi. all the sin is gone ; I learn it in the cross. In chapter vii. we get the new nature, very anxious to keep the law, not perfect, not full grown. It is not here a question of sin, but of good. Am I not to do good ? I delight in the law of God ; after the inward man I am trying to do good. Take an example of a man, a tenant, over head and ears in debt. I say to him, My son has cleared away all your liabilities ; what now ? Oh, he says, I hope to live a very grateful life, to manage my farm better, and so on. Then I say that man is not clear of law ; he is not out of Romans vii. But I say to him, I am going to bring you into *my* house, and make you heir with my son, instead of a tenant whom I had a demand on : "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." But the man cannot understand it. Just so, many find it difficult to know what is done with the old farm. At last he comes to : "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing ;" and cries out, "Oh wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ? And it is a wonderful moment when the soul gets there. It is not a question of sin, but of doing good, of trying to be good ; it is all constant trouble till I find out that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth *no good thing*. I must get there, and when I do, I can never again be disappointed with myself, because I do not expect anything from myself I am transferred to Christ ; I have done with the



old farm. Now it is to be a model one, and carried on by a new power.

In chapter viii. it is "*In Christ Jesus*," and therefore no condemnation. A man that is in Christ is perfect, has done with the old man. Chapter viii. brings out the wonderful charter: *I am in Christ*.

Look at Galatians now. In Romans the flesh is dealt with as it is in the sight of God ; but in Galatians it is how you stand with yourself. Pious people dwell on how they stand with themselves. The Galatians put themselves under law, and they were no better off than the Corinthians, who were lawless. The Corinthians were self-indulgent; the Galatians legal ; they were putting restrictions on themselves. If I have a bad temper, and I put myself under law, does my temper improve ? No ; I do not get rid of the inclination that way, and it is this that I want. And the only way to attain it is : " Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye should not do the things that ye would."

I used to say, I believe the flesh is stronger than the Spirit, but I do not say so now, because I have in Christ a greater power ; there is in me a greater power than the flesh, and that is the Spirit of God. I have no right to walk in the

ways of the flesh. A teacher ought not to speak of what he does not know in himself. The apostle gives himself as a pattern, and I can say it is a wonderful, marvellous blessedness to have done with the briar, and to have the rose occupying my mind. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

I belong to another Person altogether. I breathe another air, and I am not going to cultivate the old thing at all. "*God forbid.*" You get the world in its relation to you, and you in yours to the world. It is not the gospel that is brought before us in this mention of the cross of Christ. I would rather have the smallest atom of Christ in me, than the most beautiful thing that was ever seen in man by nature. Do you know anything of the beauty of Himself, and can you put anything for a moment in comparison with Him? God has got a man to His own mind; and we are accepted in Him, and are to be conformed to His image.

Colossians gives another form of the way in which the flesh intrudes. It is curious how we are beset by the assaults of the old man. We read in chapter ii.: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This is a very deceitful kind of intru-

sion. We may designate it methodism; it is a religious appearance; actions that correspond to the feelings that have been worked upon.

In both Ritualism and Revivalism we get what answers to the working of the feelings to make a man religious. I am always against Revivalism, because it is acting on the thing which has nothing in itself. They say good impressions are produced, but all those good impressions die away like a flower, and leave days of darkness; hence the unhappy state of many we see. There is nothing really solid in the soul but *God's* work.

That form of the intrusion of the flesh which was allowed in the Corinthians is not allowed in the Romans. In the latter, man's conscience is exercised, though he is not acting according to God. It is an interesting case. The Corinthian was *not* interesting; he says, I have got the work of Christ, and now am I am going to enjoy myself. The first Epistle was written to shew them, not that their sins were put away, but that the old man was crucified: "I determined not to know anything among you, save *Jesus Christ*," that is *objective*, "and *him crucified*," that is *subjective*. The true heart asks *where He is*. Many a person has Christ for his sins, who does not say, Where is He? but when my soul has Christ for its object, then it is, I want to know *where He is*. If you have Christ

for your conscience, you have only relief; but if He be an object to your heart, He is not only a relief but a resource; and then the question is where is He? "Where dwellest thou?" You could not have an object to your heart without knowing where that object is. If He is only an object to the conscience, it is the service that He renders that is before you; but if it is Christ for the heart, then it is

"No place can fully please us,  
Where Thou, O Lord, art not."

The apostle said "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And what were those he was writing to doing? They were indulging themselves bodily and mentally. They were full of mind and amusement. Therefore in chapter ii. 14, he says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." With the natural mind you can never know heavenly things; if you allow the briar, it cannot help you in divine things.

In chapter viii. they were occupied with things belonging to idols, and in chapter x. the apostle says, I am going to set you straight by the word of God; not by eloquence or logical power. He has wonderful reliance on the word of God. He says, "I speak unto wise men, judge ye what I say." Here is the Lord's table, and what are

you doing at it? "The cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

In the next chapter we get the supper, which brings out His love in dying for us. He died for you, and what are *you* doing? Are you enjoying yourself? Enjoying yourself in this scene without God is idolatry. In the Lord's table it is not so much my gain which is before my heart, as what it cost Christ to effect this great gain for me. I cannot charge myself with forgetting what Christ has done for me, but I often forget what it cost Him. If we were more in communion with His blood, more in the sense of what it cost Him, we should take a much more retired pathway through such a world as this. "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; this shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." And how can you indulge yourself in a world where all good effects for you come by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ? But how am I to get on? you ask. Carry out 2 Corinthians iv. 10. Do not allow *any* thing that Christ died for. You may say, He did not die for my eyesight. No; but He died for the will that works it. Your body is the Lord's.

In Philippians you find the practical life of a man who loves Christ; of one who gives up, not the *bad* things, but the *best* things, for Him. It is not a question of how far he had advanced;

the greatest mark of progress is, that I am *seeking* more of the Lord. It is not accumulation, but the more I acquire the more I seek. I have become so enriched by what I have, that I am going on to learn more. I leave everything behind to go to Him. "I do count them but dung that I may win Christ." It is a sorrowful thing that, as intelligence increases, earnestness often declines. The Psalmist says, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

In Ephesians there is the full outflow of Christ. All natural duties are carried out, but not as in Colossians. In Colossians there is resistance. Is it that we have done with nature in Ephesians? No; but that the treasure is in an earthen vessel. The Lord first *made* the vessel, but the question now is whether the Lord *works* the vessel. "Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*." *Christ* is to come out now. God does not look at us beyond our own house and His house. Every one is tested in his own house; that is where the strain is. "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?" Do not build unless you have got the material that will stand. Christ will stand. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." You will never know a sentiment until that sentiment has been acted towards yourself. No one knows love until it has been acted toward himself. "Servants be obedient to them that are

your masters . . . . as unto *Christ* . . . . doing the will of God from the heart." If you are a servant you may be a beautiful specimen to angels that you act here as Christ would act. And if you ask, How am I to get on with the powers that be ? I answer, Obey them.

May our hearts be so delighting in the beauty of the Lord, that we may realise something of the language of the hymn we sang, and look for it nowhere else.

" Oh fix our earnest gaze,  
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,  
That with Thy beauty satisfied,  
We *elsewhere* none may see."

(J. B. S.)

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## OUR PORTION.

LUKE XIV. 15-33.

OUR subject to-night is, What is the nature of the present portion of the believer.

We read in 1 Corinthians ii., "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." The meaning of the word perfect in Scripture is a person established in Christ. You may be long about it, but, if you are not yet clear, you are still a babe in Christ—you are not perfect. The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written to shew where the defect was—no particular thing about Christ. In 2 Corinthians v. he says, Now you are a new thing altogether. The hindrance is in not being clear of the old man. Till you are, you are not established in Christ. When one is clear of that, there is rest. It is then true of the believer, as it was of Israel of old: "The land had rest from war."

I belong to Christ; I am of Him; I do not belong to the old man. The only true standard is, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." The only question in everything is, What would Christ do? How am I to do this or that? How would Christ do it? If we knew Him better, this would



settle every question. I get but one standard for my conduct: *Christ*.

You say, He was not in domestic life. But He had the grace for it, though a Nazarite. Besides this He made me, that I might be a creature here to the glory of God, and He gives me grace to be as He appointed me. In Ephesians, where we are brought to the highest point, I get my duties pointed out; but there is no lower standard than Christ. Christ is all and in all. Nothing but Christ. First I have to learn that I am cleared of everything, and Christ is all; next I learn what I partake of in Christ; what is my portion. The simplest form of this is found here in the gospel narrative.

One says to the Lord: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God: God's rule. What a blessed time when we can have everything according to God; where we can be quite natural; where God will have the rule. "Eat bread;" the commonest thing. That man looked on to the millennium; he had a wonderful idea of the divine order; a beautiful conception; a blessed aspiration. We have the same idea in Exodus xxiv. They saw the body of heaven in clearness, and they ate and drank in the presence of it; that is, they went on naturally. The characteristic of the believer is to seek the kingdom of God. If I am seeking God's rule and sway in this disordered earth,

I get all things for the present as well as future.

But now, the Lord says, I am going to do something before that time. I will shew you a better thing even than that millennial day, and that is the "supper." If I am seeking something bright here, where all is disorder, I am diverted from God's scene, where all is in His order; it must be "In spirit there already." The source of joy with most is, that they are saved, and certainly I do not want to weaken that joy; it is the new song; but it is not the only song; and that song will not keep you from seeking something in the present scene.

Paul says, I am entranced by what I am brought into; by that new scene which God brings me into, and in this present time too, in spirit. It is wisdom's feast: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens; she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." (Prov. ix. 1-5.) It is a feast held in a new place: "She hath *builded her house.*"

People use this for the gospel, and I do not

• object to their doing so, but it is the *end* of the gospel, not the beginning: it is the feast of accomplished grace. You cannot have the feast before the prodigal is brought into the house. It is said the fatted calf is the sacrifice of Christ. That is not true. It is participating in the unfolding of what grace presents. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." It was not revealed to Isaiah. Then it was like folding-doors at the end of the room; God's people never saw through them; but now the folding-doors are thrown open. If they were not, we could not be told to "seek the things above." Isaiah could not give such an exhortation, for the things were not yet revealed. Christ when He went into heaven said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He did the work; He cleared man from ruin, and then He says, now "have faith in *me*." (John xiv.) That is the power to get into these things, and to keep us above all the opposition by the way.

Here, in Luke, it is more that there is a place for our hearts to delight themselves in: it is "Come; for all things are now ready." You must not lose the idea that it is a feast; it is the exhibition of the divine order. The Lord says, I will introduce you into a scene where all is of God; where you will have unbounded delight.

As Paul says: "Beside myself to God." And it is not only a feast, but a feast in a new place. The prodigal had but two places; either the far country or the Father's house. To which do I belong? There is no third place. Do I connect myself with the Father's house? Thank God I do. Christ is there, and He says, I will "come forth and serve you." "Where your treasure is there will your heart be." It is a wonderful thing to be able to say, I am not looking for joys except there. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." What hinders people is looking for things here in a scene of disorder; for green fields in the wilderness; and how a person in the wilderness craves for green fields! Souls are looking for what suits them naturally, are looking for the mercies of God to improve the things here. All this diverts the heart from the great festival in God's house. An evangelist may say, I have found a man in a highway or under a hedge. And what have you done with him, I ask? It is well to tell him of Christ for salvation, but you must not leave him there. Unseen things are eternal; and it is with these that the Spirit connects me; with the things that are *there*. I belong to Him in the place where He is. As we sing

"No place can fully please us,  
Where Thou, O Lord, art not."

• He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father." He is gone to a place that suits Him, and He says, You ought to be glad. This is not connected with my salvation, but with the delight of my heart. Of the Holy Ghost He said: "He shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you;" He will open out to you this festive scene.

The one thing I see is, that once you have got hold of the place there, you do not look for things here. That is the force of Psalm xxiii.: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." That is where I am invigorated; I have got into the elaboration of wisdom. In Joshua v. we read: "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day." It is in the place where Christ is that I have my feast.

The whole point is the difference of place; if things go crooked here, where do you find your comfort? Not down here at all, but there where He is. "Lie down in green pastures" is a beautiful figure. You do not lie down to eat; but when you are full to survey. "He leadeth me beside the still waters." I am actually prepared and furnished. I can come out quietly and orderly to my work. No man will do his work

well who has no home; but if he has, he is happy in his work; he comes from it orderly and carefully, and goes back to it eagerly: his interests and his joys are there. Thus my joys are in heaven, but my work is down here; my supplies and my support are there. This is what makes a man a stranger here.

The passover was celebrated in three places:

1. Egypt.
2. The wilderness.
3. The land.

The place gives the character to it. The first celebration was in Egypt. There is *no remembrance* there.

The second was in the wilderness, amidst trying circumstances, in a wretched scene, in great trial. They went three days and found no water. I have to learn lessons there. Many think they are in the wilderness. I wish they were, for there they would have nothing but God. It is a wonderful thing when I truly *am* in the wilderness, to remember how Christ delivered me; but there is no *spring* there. I am not "beside myself to God."

Now what a difference when you get to Canaan! There I eat the old corn of the land; there I feed upon Christ in glory.

Thus the *place* comes in. I am connected with one place or the other. When a soul is established in Christ, the thing to learn is Christ

Himself. Therefore in Ephesians Paul prays, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." That is the highest education. That is the second prayer. The first prayer refers to the purpose of God for His people; but it is from the second prayer that comes out the practical expression of Christ in the life here. If you were taken to heaven, the first thing your heart would look for would be Christ. In the brightest scene of heaven itself, you would look for Christ Himself, for the One who brought you into all this blessedness. Nothing gives such comfort of heart. Like Stephen: he was the fulfilment of John xiv. He says, There is no place for me here; and Christ says, I give you a place where I am.

Turn for a moment to 1 Kings x. Here we get the queen of Sheba who, though not so much an illustration of our position as Stephen is, yet came to Jerusalem where Solomon was. When she saw *his* wisdom, *his* house, *his* table, *his* servants, "there was no more spirit in her." Like the apostle she was entranced.

Mark how it is *his*—*his*—*his*. All things were personally connected with Solomon. In the Old Testament you get what the natural mind can take in set forth quite plainly. Thus here is one who leaves her own country, where she has plenty and wealth, to see a very wise man. She communes with him; and what is the effect? There is no spirit left in her. I get so entranced

with the feast, that I think very little of the things I possess down here. She had plenty of treasure, but she thought no more of it when she saw Solomon. And no one gets clear of natural things here, till he gets them eclipsed with what is beyond the brightness of the sun.

When we get hold of a glorified Christ (and the Holy Ghost has come down to tell us of Him) one does not know how, but things drop off, like old leaves pushed off by new. One gets clear of things almost unconsciously. Natural things lose their attraction and interest. A careful historian of his own soul knows his different besetments, and he does not know how to get free from them. But if he gets near Christ, he is set free without his knowing how. Not only am I in the closest relationship to Him, but it is a character of union of a wondrous order; He is the source of all my supplies; I have no head but Christ; I have Christ's parts; I have Christ's mind; I have Christ's wisdom; and nothing will suit me but His *place*.

Ephesians is the "royal bounty"—a gift; but I cannot keep it without Colossians. Colossians is participation; it is more experience. The queen of Sheba could leave Jerusalem and go back to her own country. She was not in relationship with Solomon. But I am, and I could not leave the place where He is. True, I have relationships *here*, but I carry them out with a new power.



• So we read, "Which of you intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it?" "Or what king going to war against another king, sitteth not down first and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" The tower is for protection, not aggression; the army is for aggression. All depends on what material I have. If it is natural it will come to grief. I have to carry on old relations in a new power.

One word more. We read in Luke xviii., "Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting." That is the answer to chapter xiv. 26. "If he *hate* not." You might say that is very severe and ascetic. Now chapter xviii. is a most interesting comment upon it. Surrender in itself is not worth anything. For instance, Jephthah surrendered what he chose; it was his own will; but what I have to surrender is whatever interferes with my *following the Lord*; that is the first thing in my mind. Chapter xiv. 26 looks like a very rigid rule; but the Lord gilds it by saying, (chap. xviii. 29)

You gain immensely in this present time ; you are not a bit a loser by what you surrender. In this feast I have such joy in the Lord that I am no loser.

We have but a poor idea of the magnificent portion God has provided for our souls. This is where we often lose power in preaching the gospel. If we had the characteristic that we have gained something wonderful outside the world, we should have immense power with the world.

The one simple lesson we have to learn is, more of Christ in the place where He is. May the thought rest in your minds, *I am here to learn something of Christ* ; and when one lesson is learnt, you will be passed on to another ; and so the heart is made more and more acquainted with Him in the scene that suits Him, and I get so cheered and established in it, that I leave all, and press toward the mark. For when my heart is acquainted with that new scene, when I have seen Him there (I must see Him there first), the moral effect is what Paul gives us in Philippians iii. : I leave all behind to get to Him.

The Lord grant we may each know more of the blessedness of that scene, and thus be proof against things here—against the many offers in this scene. When a man is looking for advancement here, for improvement in his circumstances on earth, he is not enjoying the supper. The

supper has lost its place in his heart. What a thing to have all my joys there ! To be in the place where Christ is, to have *His* festivities in that place, and to draw all my resources from thence !

(J. B. S.)

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## SYMPATHY.

HEBREWS IV. 11-16; X. 19-23.

LAST evening we had what is the Christian's portion, because of association with Christ; "the great supper;" and a new place is what characterises the great supper. "Your life is hid *with Christ*."

This is a day when there is plenty of phraseology abroad about occupation with Christ. It is everything, if true; but there is often only occupation with Christ for the relief of the *conscience*, and if so, where does it stop? It stops when the relief is met. But if He is an object to the *heart*, you will never be satisfied but in association with Him where He is. There is often the use of language without its real meaning being known; but if there is simple occupation with Christ, you cannot enjoy it but in association with Him where He is, and in communion with Him about things here. In Psalm xxiii. there is lying down first, and then I come forth refreshed for the struggle of life here, and to walk in "the paths of righteousness." I "fear no evil."

Our subject to-night is, what Christ is for us

down here; but I must first know Him where He is; if I do not know Him where He is, I shall never find Him with me down here. True, He accomplished everything down here, but you never get settled rest in your soul till you know that God has glorified Him up there. You never find a truly settled soul who does not raise the question, Where is He? Mary Magdalene says, "They have taken away my Lord." The two disciples in John i. ask, "Where dwellest thou?" It is a remarkable question; the heart is set on the discovery of where He is. It is vain for a man to tell me his heart is on a person, if he is indifferent to where that person is. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, *where Christ sitteth.*" That is what my heart wants.

Many a person is looking for Christ's sympathy down here in a sordid way. That is not the way to reach Him. I know Him as the One who has accomplished everything, and relieved my heart by giving me the consciousness that I am before God in acceptance, and that God's heart is at liberty to unfold to me by the Spirit the things prepared for them that love Him. Isaiah says, I do not see them; the folding-doors were not thrown open then. Grace originates in the mind of the person who confers it. My want is never the measure of it, though the grace covers my need.

In Hebrews x. we have right to enter into the

, holiest. The apostle is not putting Hebrews x. as an advance on chapter iv., but shewing us the history by which we have reached the point we have gained—GOD. We have got the right of access, and now we are going on to God's rest—to heaven. The mistake of Christendom is that priesthood is to get me into heaven. That is false. The *sacrifice* has got me in. I enter into heaven; I go to this great supper. Who brought me there? The good Shepherd.

In Luke xv. there are three parables, which are all occupied about one person. The Father could not have embraced the prodigal if the good Shepherd had not gone after the lost sheep; and if light had not worked in the heart of the prodigal he never would have returned to his Father: it was light that discovered the lost piece of money. Grace begins it, grace accomplishes it. I stand on simple grace. I am entitled to nothing, but I count on what is in the Father's heart for me. When I come to discover what is in that heart for me, that is grace. It is an unspeakable comfort to my heart to say, I know He will do something, though *what* He will do I know not. I would not venture to dictate to Him what He should do, but I know my Father's heart.

In Hebrews x. I have the right of entrance, and I am sustained in that bright place, not by anything of myself, but by that blessed Person who

• now is there. I have a right to go into the Father's house, and I have the extreme joy of being there in that scene.

Now chapter iv. is the character of Christ's support to me down here on earth. It is no question of *sin*. Priesthood is for me as a poor *feeble* person down here. We are going on to the rest, and how are we to get on by the way? Chapter iv. tells us how Christ supplies us as we pass on through this world. The first thing is the word of God; the second, the sympathy of Christ. I could not be sustained here where Christ is not, save by the grace of Christ. I have His sympathy.

• In John xi. I find two believers, sisters, suffering from the same affliction, a very terrible bereavement; they both are suffering, but in very different states of soul, and we see how the Lord meets and deals with each. When a soul goes wrong, it is not priesthood that sets him right; it is advocacy; the advocate has to do with sin.

In John xiii. the disciples have to learn that their feet are to be washed. The Lord rises from supper—the figure of the accomplished work of Christ's death. Christ has done one work perfectly, but then He says, I will introduce you to another work; and this is now going on. Peter did not understand this, and the Lord says, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." There is nothing so easily lost as communion.

I might lose it in looking at a picture. I have not lost my salvation, but I have lost simple concert with Christ's mind for the moment.

When the Lord rose to wash their feet, it was as though He said: I am going to introduce you to a new work which is not yet completed; and this work you can help me in. Christ separates us from the defilement we contract along the road, and we can help one another by separating one another from this defilement too. We can have no concert with the Lord without this.

*Am* I in concert with the Lord's mind? That is communion. I never lose life, or the benefits of Christ's work, but I do continually lose concert with Christ. He says, I wash your feet when you are defiled by things here; I will detach you from that which has detached you from me. That is the action of Christ's word, to separate us from that which has separated us from Him.

A very little thing separates the soul from Him. One who is in the habit of walking with the Lord feels, when he has lost Him, like the dog which has lost the scent of his master. A faithful dog goes round and round till he finds it. If I do not know intimacy with the Lord, I never know when it is disturbed. If I know the light and joy of His presence, I feel at once when I lose it. It is with the person I am most intimate, that I the most quickly understand the least



shade of reserve ; so, the more I understand what it is to be intimate with the Lord in any measure, the more I feel when a cloud comes between, when there is reserve, as we see in the Canticles.

But the Lord says, If you come to me, you will find my word working on you to remove the shade of reserve that has come between you and me ; the first great desire of my heart is that there shall be nothing between you and me. I will make it my business that there shall be no break in the intimacy. He *wiped* their feet after He had washed them ; the towel is to give the soul the sense that there is nothing between, nothing of the defilement left.

There are three actions of the word :

1. When the soul is going astray to recover it.
2. When I am going right it finds me out ; I am read by it, as in Hebrews iv. ; the word discovers the contrariety that is in me by nature.
3. To lead me on in communion. I am led along in company with the Lord Himself as the delight of my heart.

If I am not subject to the word, I do not get the Lord's sympathy. See the difference between His way with Martha and with Mary, though both were suffering, and He loved them both ; but one was subject to Him, the other was not. Martha had no sympathy. She was not subject. He does not go a step along with her ;

He stayed "in that place where Martha met him." He did not advance at all. But when Mary comes to Him, we see His sympathy. He comes alongside of her, as it were. He groans in His spirit. He is feeling what death is. He says to her, I have a deeper sense of death than you have. They were right to feel the death of their brother, but they were to be subject to the Lord in it.

Sympathy is that I feel what you feel. A great characteristic of Christ's sympathy is that He always presents Himself in the character that suits the person with whom He sympathises. Trial does not soften people; sympathy does. This terrible bereavement was used by the Lord as an opportunity to acquaint Mary with the heart she would never lose, with all the depth and the tenderness of the love that could never be taken from her; so that "out of the eater came forth meat."

Weakness is not sinfulness. If a thing is wrong, Christ does not sympathise with us in it; nevertheless His love never ceases: He says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." But He does not shew sympathy to a person who is perverse; the word must deal with that person. I often ask myself, Does the Lord sympathise with me in this? The first ministry of His grace brings the soul to understand, "I have considered for you." Is the Lord thinking about

me? Yes. What I want is the Lord's grace. I know Him, I belong to Him, I feed on the manna, Christ on earth.

Something may present itself and you may ask Him, Have you some way for me to act in this? Yes, He says, I have. He has some particular way for me to act in every circumstance. Look at the disciples in the storm. If they had faith in the Lord now, they would be all asleep as He is. When He rises up, He puts them to sleep: "There was a great calm." He walks beside Mary, He educates her in this: You are come to a throne of grace. Lazarus is alive again. He had given her a wonderful disclosure; He had acquainted her with His heart.

Jonathan gives all his *things* to David; but Ruth, a poor woman, outstrips him. Many would give up honours to a great conqueror, but Ruth *follows* Naomi when she is nothing at all. She says, I have learned a friend in my sorrow, and that friend shall be mine, though she herself has nothing; I will follow her unto death.

In Mary we find the same thing. In John xii. she is in concert with the Lord, She says: The most precious thing I have shall go down to the tomb with Him. A friend in sorrow who has known sorrow, is the greatest friend of all. It is very interesting to see that Mary's suffering was not relieved by meeting with the Lord.

(Chap. xi.) She discovered what was in the Lord.

The moment I begin to walk in this path I find out all my contrarieties. For the right road there are ninety-nine roads wrong, and the heart is ever inclined to go up one of those roads. When it does, the Lord says, I will send my word after you and draw you out of it, but I cannot go with you myself; I cannot sympathise with you in it. The washing of my feet sets me free from the wrong road, and, the moment I get in the right one, I have the confirmed sense from the Lord Himself, I am with you, I bear you company.

In John xxi. He deals with Peter in order to reach communion. If I have not the sense that the Lord sympathises with me, that He is looking after my concerns, I cannot turn round and think of *His* affairs. If you can, "the God of peace shall be with you," and "whatsoever things are true . . . think on these things." I am not going in company with the Lord, I am worried about my own affairs; but if I have the sympathy of Christ I shall not be worried, I know that He is thinking about my affairs, and I leave them all to Him.

Peter was the first of the apostles the Lord met after His resurrection; he was forgiven, but he was not in communion. Then at the sea of Tiberias, the Lord says, I will shew you I am thinking of

you; and when they came to shore they found everything ready; "a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread." And He says to them, Come and dine. But there was more than this to be done to restore communion. Peter had no fear of the Lord, yet he was not in communion, until he entered into the full effect of the word touching the *root* from which the failure sprang.

That is the real effect of the word; it is not mere forgiveness, it is much more. The question, thrice repeated; "Lovest thou me?" touches his self-confidence, which is the fruitful source of all our failure and departure from the Lord; and where we least think we should fail, that is the very point where we *do* fail. If I had been self-distrusting, I should not have brought myself there. Where there is self-distrust the eye of faith rests upon Him who was down here, and who glorified God here, through all that bright pathway from infancy to the throne.

The Lord grant that each of us may know better His sympathy as we walk through this evil world. Amen.

(J. B. S.)

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## COMMUNION.

JOHN XIV.

THE subject for to-night is communion. There is nothing the true heart desires more. And it is not only that *my* heart desires it, but *Christ's* heart desires it. This is an immense comfort, and yet it is so little known. We know so little of what it is to be in company with the Lord; walking down here, but in company with Him. It is not only that He is considering for me; but I may be in company with His mind, with Himself. The youngest believer may be in company with the Lord, though he may know very little.

In John xiii. the Supper was in prospect, in remembrance of His death. All was in prospect. And now He rises from supper, and begins another work, a new work. He has finished one work, completed it; "there is no more offering for sin;" what the supper represented is over, and He begins another work which is going on now. Washing our feet: "The washing of water by the word." The Lord did not give His word in this way to Old Testament saints; you do not find Him washing their feet. It is Christ's present work for us; and what is the object of it? That we should have communion with Himself.

The object of His work on the cross was that I should be saved; the object of His present work is that I should have part with Him. Relief to the conscience alone does not satisfy the heart. Where there is affection for Christ, there must be longing for communion with Him; but sometimes we deceive ourselves by thinking we have it when we have not really.

There is nothing so gratifying to the heart, or so touching, as Christ saying: I will make it my business, that there shall be no break between you and me. Christ "loved the church and gave himself for it;" but more: "He sanctifies and cleanses it with the washing of water by the word." The word comes out in a new way to produce a new and distinct effect. When Peter objected to having his feet washed, the Lord's answer is: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." "*Part*" is communion. The object of the work which He now institutes, is by the ministry of the word to detach me from everything here, which causes a shade of distance between Him and me.

Look what the thought of His heart about me must be! It is affecting, entrancing, to think that all day long Christ's thought is, I desire that there should be no break between that soul and me. And it is not that He tells me to make it *my* business, but that He will make it *His* business. So that I can trace this work, this

washing of my feet up to the very heart of Christ; and surely nothing can affect my heart like that. Do you walk along in the sense of His thought: There is to be no break between you and me? He makes those helpers with Him whose feet are washed.

There are three great subjects which we individually have in communion with the Lord. He has gone to prepare a *place* for us. This is the individual line. He has got a place for me up there. Besides this there are *service* and *testimony*. These have to do with others; they are connected with maintaining His name.

There is the individual enjoyment of a soul walking in communion with the Lord, the eye turned to Him. "Ye believe in God, believe also in *me*." Well, what have I communion with Him about? He has got a place for me there; He says, "I am the way." The moment the soul is liberated by the work of Christ, the question arises, Where is He? So in Colossians we read, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, *where Christ sitteth*."

This is the action of the Holy Ghost. In Acts vii. He declares to Stephen where Christ is. The delay with souls consists in their not being clear as to the first work of Christ; for when they are, the question must be, "Where dwellest thou?" and the moment the heart rests on Christ and knows that He has got a place for me there, what an



“ effect it has ! It is a cheer to the heart to find *there* is my communion !

Besides this He makes known the Father. I am made acquainted with the One who owns the place. Heaven in a sense is a strange place ; but the Father, blessed be His name, is not a stranger. “ I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it.” He is the way, and He Himself discovers the power.

We will use the word *concert*, for the word communion has become so common that we have lost the real meaning of it. The meaning of communion with Christ is that I am in concert with Him. We are together in company, we are in the same line of things. No one can follow the Lord save in communion.

The latter part of the chapter brings out two other things connected with communion : obedience to the word, and that He makes Himself known to the soul—He manifests Himself. “ He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* myself to him.”

You are going on the very same line in which He goes Himself. He is telling you the true path to take, and not only that but He says, “ I will manifest myself to you.”

Judas asks, How ? And the Lord answers, The Father and I will come and make our abode with

you down here. The language is incomprehensible in magnitude. If you are not exercised as to it, you will not make much of it. If you are, perhaps you will make more of it than I do. It is the climax of the wonderful position the Lord would have us in, going along in company with Himself, we down here in the world, and He in the bright heavens up there. "Abode," in verse 23 is the same word as "mansions," in verse 2.

We talk of difficulties and perplexities! How little the heart is really in concert, in *simple* concert, with Christ! He has gone up to the right hand of God in greater power than ever, and He is using the elevation that He has gone to, to effect deliverance for me from all things that would separate Himself and me. Christ delights to have me in company with Himself about these wonderful things, and He uses His word to keep me from everything that would interfere with it. It is not a question of union: it is concert; it is the *effect* of the union.

Let us turn to a few examples to illustrate this. I may have communion according to my intelligence of Christ. In John xii. we find three persons, all three of whom have a measure of communion. Lazarus is sitting at the table; Martha is serving; but the one who was in simple concert with Christ's mind in the secret of His heart, travelling in company with Him, was Mary. She would take her place in company

with Him, and He was going to die! The other two were not in full company with Him. Sitting at the table with Him was a great privilege; serving Him was a great distinction; but could anything equal being in company with Himself as to what He was about to do?

Again, in John xxi. the Lord deals with Peter as to how he had failed in following Him. He was the first apostle the Lord met after His resurrection, he saw Him, He had breathed on him, had sent him forth. (Chap. xx.) Peter had no sense of fear of Him, but he was not in communion. A person may do a great deal without being in communion, but he has not the Lord's mind as to how to act. Moses did not get the Lord's mind for forty years. You may have got out of the path, but not out of grace, and you might have a great deal of blessing, and still not be in communion, not in accordance with the Lord's mind. This chapter (John xxi.) shews how the Lord brings Peter into communion. If we are true to the Lord, we shall desire to be brought into it. The Lord says, "Come and dine."

It is interesting to mark that Peter is not restored yet, though he had been breathed on and commissioned. You will find that the sympathy of the Lord precedes communion. He shews the interest He takes in me, before He comes to effect the removal of the thing in me which is a barrier to communion. What barred

communion to Peter was self-confidence. His heart was not restored, he was off the line. If we are in communion, we are going on the line. Peter had gone fishing.

It is important to see how a man may be receiving and learning the goodness and truth of the Lord, and still not be in His mind. How do I know when I am in His mind? When I follow Him. "Come and dine" is the sympathy side. Here, the Lord says, all is prepared, here is the fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread; why do you go fishing? If you were in concert with me, you would see that you had a line of things of your own, and had not consulted my line, like Martha.

Communion is, I know the mind of the Lord; I am in concert with it; though I may be very far from getting into the depths of it. You may say, I have His mind so far. Then act on it. The Lord says to Peter, I must touch the thing in your heart which bars you from communion: "Lovest thou me?" And then He adds the true practise of communion: "Follow me." There may be devotedness without communion. Jonathan was devoted, but not in communion. Ruth was in communion: "Where thou goest I will go." When I get into communion my heart is called into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. There is nothing so cheering to our poor hearts down here. The Lord likes

me to go His own way, in concert with His own mind, and He enables me to accomplish what His desires are.

There is a difference between sympathy and communion. If I am afflicted or in distress, the Lord comes to me and says, I know what you are going through; I will give you a hand. He shews the interest of His heart for me. That is, "Come and dine." It is the thing that man wants; to think that the Lord is taking care of my interests; it touches my heart.

But some mistake this sympathy for communion; for instance, the sick often do. There is a sense in their souls of how Christ is considering for them in their weak state, and they think that is communion. He may yet have to touch the sore spot of what hinders such a one from entering into His interests; and it is a bitter process in many souls when the Lord touches the thing in the heart that hinders them from going on in His line. The more you go on with the word and in the path, the more will your tendencies be found out. If Abram goes into the land, he will be found out there. If you keep to the Lord and to the Lord's path, you will learn yourself; you will find out the desperate tendency there is in your heart to turn from that path. But that is directing, not correcting you.

There are two actions of the word: correcting and directing. In Hebrews iv. it is directing,

while discovering all the treachery that is in your heart, but you are meanwhile going on in the path. We do not enough understand the effect of the word. I see the apostle accomplishing wondrous things by the word. Luke xxiv. is our side of John xx. There the Lord joins the two disciples on their way to Emmaus, and first opens out the word to them; He next appears to them. These two disciples were not two of the apostles; they were ordinary witnesses, chosen; and He expounds the word to them. This is practically the way souls are enlightened now. But, after He opens the word to them, He appears to them. And this is the practical difficulty in souls.

There is a moment when the soul knows union with Christ. People talk of union, but do not know it. Has your soul ever got a glimpse, by the Spirit of God, of Christ risen? of "the mark" of which Paul speaks? How can you press toward the mark if you do not see it? "The mark" is Christ in heaven; He is the goal I am going to. Have I seen it? Practically it is what souls have lost sight of. They do not look for acquaintance with Christ risen. The first thing is the education of the word; the second, Christ Himself must be seen. The word delights the heart, but till the eye of your soul has rested on the Person of Christ, you have not the model for the word to take; there is no formation.

These two disciples received the word, and they saw the Lord; and now they go in the same road with Him. The moment the word has practical effect on me, I am going in the same road with the Lord. When the word is effective, I am in concert with His mind. It was a blessed effect here; their hearts were lighted up with the word; it was God's view of the life of Christ; He taught them God's view of His life. Next they know Him; and now they start off for Jerusalem which was then the centre of His interests. It was too late before to go further; it is not now too late to go all the way back. What a beautiful energy produced by association with Christ! It could not be otherwise.

People often use a high phraseology for low things. A man may be receiving blessings from God without being in communion with Him. In Genesis xxvi. the Lord was very gracious to Isaac; He had really blessed him in the land of the Philistines, but when he left it all, the Lord *appeared* to him *that same night*. When the Lord discloses Himself to His servants He proposes to them the character and line of things they are to pursue, and He is with them as long as they follow it. Take as instances Moses at the burning bush; also Joshua, when he met the man with the drawn sword; and Isaiah, when the seraph touched his lips.

If I am in communion with the Lord, even if

only a babe, I shall delight in His company. "Blessed are the people that hear the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." There is an allusion here to being in the tabernacle near enough to hear the bells of the High Priest. The Lord delights in my going in company with Him, and is it not delight to me? It is not only that He pities and helps me in trials.

In Philippians there is a different acquaintance with Christ in each chapter. All of us are in more or less trial and difficulty in which we can have company with the Lord. If I tell out all my difficulties to Him, I shall have the peace of God, chap. iv. 7; and what am I to do then? "Whatsoever things are lovely . . . . think on these things." You could not do this if you were not in peace. If worried by the affairs of life, you cannot display these beautiful traits of character. Unburden then your heart to God; tell Him all; and you will come out in the practical thing with the peace of God; and the God of peace with you.

This is not for any high line of service, but for the daily routine of life. I am not worried by the details of daily life, because I have learned what Christ is to me. So that Paul says, "I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me." Instead of being flurried and worried, I come out gracious and considerate to everyone.



If not, I am not walking in the circumstance in the power of Christ.

The 3rd chapter of Philippians is in advance of the 4th. Christ is so good to me, that my heart is set on Him; and if it is, nothing will suit me but association with Him where He is. I can count all things for Him loss; and "one thing I do;" I am set for the mark. I see Him superior to everything. What marks a man in communion with Christ? He knows Him; he is in fellowship with His sufferings; and he is forgetting the things behind. If my heart is set on Christ as my object, and if I am attracted by Him, if I have found out what He has been to me, I am delighted to be acquainted with Him, and nothing but His path down here suits me. What Naomi was to Ruth when she was a widow, bound her heart to Naomi. When I have found out what Christ has been for me, He is an object to my heart. I am occupied with Him; I long to be with Him; and I desire only to have His path down here. Then what characterises me practically is "forgetting the things that are behind."

Chapter ii. is higher. It is "the mind of Christ." I have communion with Him now about the church; I have got another line of communion. Paul was in them all. Chapter iv. is the lowest; there we get help for ourselves in our circumstances. But while looking for Christ's help, you may have communion with Him, and,

if you have found the help, you are actually in the manner of life in which Christ would be here in the same circumstances.

He is the One my heart is attracted to ; I want to be in communion with Him. We may have communion with a person without a word passing between us ; there is often communion thus about common things.

One great proof of being in communion is that I am not strait-laced ; I can enter into everything, but in a godly way. The Lord was the most natural person possible. Most surely God has to do with man as to nature—His own creation. And we read “naturally care for your state.”

(J. B. S.)

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## CONSECRATION.

EXODUS XXIX.

THE subject I desire to bring before you this evening is our consecration, and by this I understand not consecration *to* service, but consecration *for* service; I desire to look at what consecration to God really is.

I come *from* God for service. What am I before Him? It is in keeping with what I am *there* that I shall be *here*.

How do I get preparation for service? By *consecration*. Peter tells us there is "a holy priesthood," and "a royal priesthood." The first is to God; the second for man. I must be a holy priest before I can be a royal priest; I must be in before I can come out. I first get the sense of what I am before God in Christ, and of what Christ is to God; I have communion with God's thoughts about Christ (it is not here communion with what Christ is occupied with; that is connected with us individually); and then I have to learn how I am fitted to act for Christ down here.

I cannot represent what I do not know. Moses took forty days to get an impression, and then he

came out with his face shining. The Lord came "*from God.*" How different we should be in everything if we came from God! It is not going to God; that is not the question here. It is very right to go to God, that is prayer; but when you come back from Him, that is the thing. After preaching, when I go to the Lord I may find that a good deal of self has come in, though I may have been in His mind in the desire to serve Him.

Here there are a bullock and two rams. The bullock was the sin-offering. Every saved person believes that Christ bore the judgment of his sins. If not, he is not clear of the sense of judgment. He "died the just for the unjust *to bring us to God.*" His work was not only to get me out of hell, it was to *bring me to God.* The prodigal was not only *out* of the far country, he was brought *into* the Father's house. The thief on the cross was brought to God. The Lord says to him, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

There were *two* rams to represent Christ. Aaron and his sons are a figure of the church, and in verse 15 they are identified with the sacrifice. The whole ram is Christ gone up to God, "raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." He is there in all His own excellency, in the perfection of His accomplished work; He has gone up to God as a sweet-smelling savour;

and I am not only out of judgment, but in the sweet savour of Christ to God. It is a wonderful thing. This is where the Spirit puts me in the Epistle of John, "As he is, so are we in *this world*." How blessed ! Is He the Father's delight there ? So am I. Is He welcome there ? So am I. Is He without a cloud there ? So am I. His love perfected in me.

You will never be fit for service till you are clear with God. What proved that Job was clear with God ? When he prayed for his friends. When freed as to himself he can intercede for others. But must I not think of my poor soul ? By all means. Do not think of anything but your poor soul until your poor soul is settled. But when it *is* settled think of Him who settled for it. And who settled for it ? CHRIST. *Now* think of Him.

Noah was saved by the ark. When he came out from it on the earth he offered a burnt-offering. The sweet savour of it, which is a figure of Christ, went up to God. Man was not any better, but God says, I will look on man differently now : "I will no more curse the ground for man's sake." The burnt-offering is connected with resurrection : the ram went up whole. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." Is it because we know that Christ *died* ? No, but because He is *risen*, and at the right hand of God. You will never get rest in your

soul till you know Christ as the burnt-offering to God ; and that now, in this place, on this earth, where I was an alien and a wanderer from God, I am placed in the moral state in which Christ is at the right hand of God ; in every moral feature that belongs to Christ !

The first ram is Christ gone up to God. That is what I am before God ; I am not only relieved, but I am enjoying Christ, and in His sweet savour. The second ram is consecration, and brings us as *priests* to God. I am in a new enjoyment now, in a new order of things entirely : a holy priesthood. I have not to do with the royal priesthood yet ; that is service.

Are you consecrated ? Often you hear the expression used, "consecrated for service." It is what it is to God. I am brought into the most blessed thing. I am made to participate in what God has in Christ ! It is a wonderful moment of joy. And I am made conscious too, not only that I am accepted in the Beloved, that is the first ram ; but of what I am myself made by Christ ; that is what the second ram is. To me, it represents what the church is in Christ ; not only the sense of what God has in Christ, but the sense of what I am in this Blessed One. It is a great thing to find out what I am with God ; not only accepted in the Beloved, but what I am as being of Christ to God.

In verse 20 blood was put on the ear, hand

and foot. Every thing connected with the avenues to the soul of man is under the grace of God. All is unto God, consequent on the blood. Then there is the oil. That is sealing. The full thing is the sense in my soul not only that I am accepted without a charge, but also that I am anointed, sealed with the Holy Ghost. "I have an unction from the Holy One." I am on new ground. I can enter into the Holiest. I have not got there by any carnal ordinance, but by the blood of Jesus; and I have boldness to enter; I have a right to be there; I have not only access, but I have boldness to enter that bright scene; and this not by any carnal power, but by the Spirit of God. I am sealed. The great moral effect is, I have to do with God. I am on a new footing altogether.

We read: 'Thou shalt take of the ram the fat and the rump, and the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and the right shoulder; for it is a ram of consecration: and one loaf of bread, and one cake of oiled bread, and one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord: and thou shalt put all in the hands of Aaron, and in the hands of his sons; and shalt wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord.' Here we get the meat-offering and the peace-offering. This is *contemplation*. It does not say you *appropriate*

this. When you come to appropriation you feed. Here it is contemplation. It is put into the hands of Aaron and his sons and *waved*. Thus we contemplate Him.

Saints lack this contemplation too much. What more delightful occupation for the heart, than to get God's thoughts about the Person of Christ? In the margin, consecration is to "fill the hand." What fills your hands? Is it any *work* that fills them? These hands which once did their own pleasure are now filled with the wonderful excellency of *Christ*! The fat was found in His death; they could not get at it but by death. All the excellency of His death is offered to God. The meat-offering is His *life*; in *death* the excellency *fully* came out. What fills your hands going to visit the sick, or to lecture, or to do any service? Is it the excellency of Christ? If when I go to visit or to speak to souls I have been thinking of politics, I shall not be of any use. I am coloured by what my mind has been dwelling on. But if the Lord is before my soul in His wonderful excellency, it does not matter how I speak. Something comes out that is suited to meet the souls I am with, for I am looking at Christ.

The third thing is the wave-breast. "And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord: and it shall be thy part." This



is, I suppose, intercession. This is what Christ is to God for us.

Then comes appropriation: "And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place." In the peace-offering the right shoulder was the priest's part, but in the ram of consecration, it did not belong to any one; it went up to God, as we see in verse 22. It is beyond me, as it were. I do not appropriate it. I contemplate Him with delight of heart, and I am brought to this, to be one entirely given to God, a priest to God. But in verse 31, I feed on Him; I am appropriating Him, and thus acquiring vigour of soul. That is the value of food, to give vigour and strength. And, as I appropriate that blessed One, I am in the excellency of His accomplished work at the right hand of God; I am in company with Him. As in Colossians: not only am I a believer, but I participate of Christ; I have great things in connection with that blessed One.

Now we will look at some examples of this, to make clear to us what is the effect of consecration. I am suggesting that you should search for *yourselves*. Suggestive teaching is the most helpful of all teaching, for it suggests to a person the very thing he requires, and thus he is helped.

Let us first look at Isaiah vi. We here see in the prophet an example of the defect that is in every one, until he is rightly with God. Isaiah

was a converted man, a distinguished prophet and servant, but the Lord says, as it were, You cannot go; you are not right with me: and until you are right *with* me, you cannot be right *for* me. He was not clear in the presence of God; he was not, we may say, a priest to God. He was not able to travel into the presence of God and say, Not only am I placed here without a cloud, but I know Jesus here. I participate with Him. That is the second ram. But when the seraph touches his lips, look at the effect! It is, "Here am I; send me." Now he is ready to go, and he comes from God. That makes all the difference. The Lord needed no preparation for service; He always came from God; He never left heaven. It makes an immense difference about everything if I come from God.

Next turn to Psalm lxxiii. Here is a pious man looking at things here in this world, but he has not himself been to God; he is not a priest; he is not until he goes "into the sanctuary." Note, it is a change of *place*, not a change of opinion. It is a wonderful thing to change your place; to go into the sanctuary and to find that, instead of being repulsed, you have wonderful acceptance there. See what comes of it! What an effect it had on him! What a sense he got of God! "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" He says, "I am continually with Thee." I will "declare all Thy works." It is a wonderful thing

to get near God ; the Psalmist was fit now to look at things here.

In Philippians iv. I have got the peace of God. What did you do to get it ? you ask. I did nothing. I only went in to Him, and I got His peace. I got a token of being near him. If you got the idea of what consecration is, you would see how you are fitted practically to act in circumstances down here. I do press this on your hearts, *that if you want really to be according to Christ in anything down here, come from God.*

Look at Moses in Exodus xxxiii. Moses is in the mount with God. On descending he finds the people are in a terrible state on earth. He says, That is a contrast to the state I was in ! I was in a glorious place ; I was practically enjoying being with Christ ; not only have I a right to it, but I was enjoying it. He comes out, and he is master of the occasion. He did not get a word of direction, but he does everything for God : " He took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp." How did he know that was the right thing to do ? He came from God, and so he knew the thing that suited God. When I am in contemplation of Christ I am imbued with the virtues of Christ ; and I come out from the presence of God to reproduce them in my own walk.

The question as to everything now is, Do you

work from God to man? Philanthropy works from natural benevolence to man; but I am to come from God to man; I am sanctified to obedience. Christians and philanthropy are so often found together; but the moment a Christian drops to the level of philanthropy, he is nowhere.

The gospel is sometimes used in that way, as the best thing for man; but if you come from God, your desire will be to bring the poor soul into what delights the heart of God. An evangelist is one sent from God to fill up vacancies in the heart of Christ. They are not all in yet; you must sweep the house till you find them; you must search the world round. You work from the heart of Christ. If you have not love for poor souls, you do not know the heart of Christ.

When the Lord came down from the mount, He met the very worst state of things possible. He came from God, and entered into all the need here. Contrast does not affect us if we are walking simply with God. Paul was up there in the third heaven. But it was not by any abilities of his own that he was brought into that scene, and he had no abilities of his own up there. When he came down he got the thorn. And he says, I do not understand this; take it away. He wanted to use his natural abilities. But the Lord says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my

strength is made perfect in weakness;" and he finds that what was small in the eyes of men, is blessed with God.

Look at Psalm lxxxiv. Here again it is first God, then man. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee." That is in a scene where there is nothing to hinder the flow of praise. *Then* it is "blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee." That is his state. "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength." Paul had to find out that it was not enough to have enjoyment; what he wanted here was strength. You do not want strength if you are not weak. You do not want strength if there is no opposition. The soul enters into the region of light and glory, delights in God, and now comes down to the valley of Baca, and makes it a well; comes down to be useful to man. How can you serve God if you do not know Him? It is the one who most knows Christ that best opens out the perfections of that blessed One. What a marvellous thing that God should let me see what Christ is to Him! In His presence the soul discovers the wonderful perfection of Christ in the sight of God, and shares in them too. We have "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ."

In the Gospel of Luke I see very particularly

that before *every* thing the Lord is in prayer ; not to get something from God, but He looks at everything as it was with God *first*, and then He comes into this scene. He comes out from God, but He never really left Him.

Look at Anna in Luke ii. Here again it is Godward first. Her continual occupation was with God, "continued in fastings and prayers night and day," and then she comes from Him to speak of Him "to all those who looked for redemption in Israel." Where do you come from ?

Look at Joshua v. Here is actual preparation for conflict. Inside with God first ; then you come out as a heavenly soldier.

In Ephesians it is, "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith." I get acquainted with that blessed One in the presence of God. He is God's delight, and He is dwelling in my heart. That is a wonderful thing ! It is not doctrinal, it is practical, this blessed Person dwelling in my heart. Then come down to practise it : "I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." Or, as in Romans, "I beseech you *by the mercies of God*, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." You are put up there first, and come down from these wonderful things to all the various circles, the details of daily life, as masters, servants, children, parents, wives and husbands.

The Lord grant that each heart may be led

into it. It is an immense cheer to the heart to understand in a little measure that I can enjoy what Christ is, He who is the delight of God's heart. And the place He is in there is my place before God ; and He has not only put me without a cloud there, but made me participate with Him as a priest to God, so that I can enjoy it myself, and can come out to act for God in this world.

(J. B. S.)

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## W O R S H I P.

JOHN IV.

THE full character of worship was not known in Old Testament times. The word worship often means only homage ; but if I really adore a person, relationship to that person only enhances the character of the adoration. There is worship in the Psalms, but nothing is known of relationship in them, therefore the worship of the Psalms has not the character of *this* worship.

Until you are established in your soul, you cannot make God an object. Christendom has lost the idea of worship. We hear of a house of worship, and the question, "In what place do you worship?" There may be sincere worship in a so-called "place of worship," but that is not the character of worship. There is a great difference between godliness and worship. Godliness is the sense of what God is. In worship I am bowed before Him, I worship in the sense of having to do with One with whom I am in the closest relationship. It is not simply that I am bowed before Him ; but that my heart is bowed in adoration to the One to whom I am closely related : "The *Father* seeketh such to worship him."



We find a contrast to the fourth chapter of John in the second chapter. In the second we get man's utter failure. Both the natural state and the religious state of man is a failure: at the marriage feast the wine is out, and when the Lord goes into the house of God, instead of finding there worshippers for God, He finds it a place of merchandise.

But in chapter iv. we find the Lord stating two things: first, what you will *be*; you do not want wine; for "whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall *never thirst*," you are put into an entirely new state. Second, you "worship the Father:" "The Father seeketh worshippers." And it is an entirely new order: "neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem;" it is not connected with any antecedents; it is a new order of things. God takes a new kind of character; that of the nearest relationship. My heart learns that the Father really seeks that I should be *in* this adoration, conscious of how close I am to Him, absorbed, detained by an object that controls me. And the nearer I get to the blessed God, there is, not only a sense of His Majesty, but a sense of the relationship in which I am to Him in all the unfolding of His glory.

This was not so in olden times, and the defect in the present day arises from people not understanding the character of the worship that belongs to us now. It is not that I lose the homage.

Homage is to a sovereign, and that is not lost. But I render all this homage to One to whom I am in the nearest relationship: to the *Father*. You do not get the right character of worship now, if you do not connect the relationship with the homage.

There is a danger of calling low things by high names. A prayer meeting is sometimes called a worship meeting. There is nothing higher than a meeting for worship. It is not only that we are gathered there, but we understand what we are there for. You come into the presence of God to be occupied with Him. One who thus comes must know he is a child. If I do not know I am a child, I cannot worship the Father. Priesthood comes before worship. In hymns people sometimes lose the idea of worship in praise. There *is* praise in worship, but if it is merely praising for benefits, that is not worship.

In Psalm ciii. the first verse is in a higher key than the second: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." You are thinking of nothing but Himself. The second verse drops down to praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." You are occupied with the things you receive from Him, and not simply with what God is in Himself. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the

fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." I do not want to lose the lower thing, but I must not miss the higher.

We read at the end of Luke: "And they worshipped him, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." What is the difference between these two things? Praise is very simple; it is because He did so-and-so for me; that is very happy work. But the force of the word bless is *eulogise*. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." It is not only the sense of what is due to Him; but that you are in close relationship to that wonderful Person.

Again, in 1 Corinthians xiv., we read: "And so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is among you of a truth." How little we have of that now! It does not say that such an one was converted; but that, "convinced of all, judged of all," he reports that "God is among you of a truth." Not only was the Spirit of God there, but there was the activity of the Spirit of God. How much we have lost that! how feeble we are! how little our souls are brought into the sense of His presence! What trifling and self-will can be maintained in the presence of the Lord! People say now sometimes, "We do not need speaking," which shews how little they are in the mind of

the Lord. It was the prophet speaking by the Spirit of God that brought this out: there was homage to the greatness of God's presence among His people.

Where does worship begin? and what really is the place connected with it? In Hebrews x. we find the right of entrance into the holiest, and the condition of the person that has a right to go in: he has "no more conscience of sins." That is the character of the person: he has no more *conscience* of sins; it does not say *consciousness*. Conscience of sins is a sense that God has a claim on me because of sins; but the purged worshipper knows that God has no more claim on him because of sins. It is a wonderful character of perfection. You approach the holiest, and find your proper place of worship. You have the right of entrance. No more conscience of sins. Do I not do them? That is another question. Here it is not a question of consciousness, but of conscience: God has *no* more remembrance of sins. I, a worshipper, can come into the presence of God and say, "The worshipper once purged has no more conscience of sins." "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel."

It is an immense comfort to the heart to get hold of this. My Father is well pleased. God looks comfortably at me. He says in terms, I have never lost the efficacy of the work my Son

has done; I have not a single feeling about you but *love*. You have boldness to enter.

People sometimes say, "I am afraid I shall lose it." I ask, Did you ever find it? Do not talk of losing a thing until you find it. Hebrews x. shews, that if we do not know entrance, we must be imperfect all through. Here it is simply the *right* of entrance, not yet the character of worship; it is not here what you are doing; but you have a title to go in to the very holiest scene, where the most devoted Jew could not go in from fear. Tradition says that the high priest had a rope about him when he went in, in order that if he died those without might draw him out again; when the smoke of the incense went up, they knew he was alive.

But now everything that was against me is put away by the blood of His Son. I do not look to the blood to clear me when I fail. It is the ashes of the red heifer that have done that, as we see in Numbers xix., not the blood; and this is a much more severe process. The blood is grace; the ashes bring to my remembrance by the Spirit of God, what the Son of God went through for that self-indulgence, and those trifling gratifications I have so lightly given way to. The ashes in the running water sprinkled on the unclean person is the Spirit of God bringing me to the sense of the judgment executed on Christ for my sin, and

what it cost Him, and I repudiate not only the thing I have done, but the nature which did it.

The apostle says, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way;" not a carnal way. We come in on new ground entirely, by the Spirit of God. People talk of losing it, and you may lose *sight* of it; you may wander from it; but the *right* to it is established, and if you recover what you lose, it is only to get back where you were before; you get nothing new.

Light detects: that is its first action. People are often so pleased with being an object of light, that they stop there. They say, I know I am a Christian. Is that all? If I am searched by the word that is not all. The light first acts *on* me; it first exposes what is contrary to Him, detects it; and then I can be occupied with what is in the light, with God Himself: "In the light as he is in the light."

Nothing can be more wonderful for the soul than to have a right to enter into a scene of perfect holiness. The first thing that Moses was told to make was the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat; and yet the most pious of the people never got to it. But in Romans iii. we read, "Whom God hath set forth to be a mercy-seat." God's *first* thought in Exodus is effectually carried out in Romans for the poor sinner.

If you have once tasted of being in the holiest

of all, you are never happy till you are there again. It says, "Awake, thou that sleepest;" you may have got very dull, you may have been asleep and inactive, as the bride in Canticles v., an example of one asleep, one who misses carrying out her feelings into practical action. There is nothing more important than to carry the feelings I have into practical action. Feeling is worth nothing if not carried into effect; "I sleep, but my heart waketh." He withdraws Himself to teach her the value of Himself, and, when that is learnt, she finds Him in His own proper place.

In Deuteronomy xxvi. there is nothing about the right to enter; but we get that which really interests the soul in connection with what God's grace is. In verse 1 you get *dwelling* in the land, not only that you are come to it. Is the holiest of all the same as Canaan? you ask. The holiest of all is the moral position we occupy before God; the land is the *place*; it is another scene, and I am in it. Where is the holiest of all? In heaven! That is the moral side of it. The apostle in Hebrews takes up the figure of the tabernacle. He says to them, If you want a priest you must get him where He is. He has passed into the heavens. What a sense is awakened in the soul! I am there in the sense of adoring homage to One who is in the closest relationship to me: and the more my soul is drawn

out in the sense of the greatness of that blessed One, the more I have the sense that I am related to Him.

Hebrews x. gives me my condition. I am fit for God, and suited to Him. Deuteronomy xxvi. tells me the nature of the place which is given to me—it is a land of milk and honey. I have the sense of being in a wealthy place. “I rejoice in every good thing which the Lord my God has given unto me.” I begin with God, and go down to everything connected with me. What do you think the prodigal felt when he was brought into the Father’s house? Did he not feel that he had got into a wonderful place? His condition was “a Syrian ready to perish,” and now he is actually brought into this wealthy place!

Then there are the firstfruits, verse 10: the going up of the heart to Him. I am *come* into this wealthy place; it is not a question of getting there. That is not worship. What would you call worship? To worship I must draw near first. When I draw near, if there is anything on my conscience I am sure to find it out. I find what stops the road, The action of the word on a person who is dull prepares him to draw near. And having drawn near I have a sense in my soul of the most ineffable acceptance with God, and that the Lord Jesus Christ maintains me there in perfect fitness for that scene. And what is the character of the wor-



ship? I am adoring the Father in spirit and in truth.

If a hymn is given out to excite the feelings, the worship drops down at once. If to express all the purposes of God's grace to me, my heart is in perfect tune with it: "making melody in your hearts to the Lord." "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." For this we have to get the full character of worship. The Father seeks it. We have to do with Him to whom we are now brought. There is not only the ineffable sense that I am placed entirely suited to the eye of God; but, while adoring the Father, the heart conscious of relationship, I know the character of the place, and what it is to me; I lay down my basket and worship.

The second prayer in Ephesians is the result of a person knowing he is in this blessed place. Being there I pray for the present results of being in it. Chapter ii. is the result of the first prayer—of knowing the counsels of God in the heavenly places. And what does he pray for then? For the *present* result of that knowledge. Here the *Father* is the great point. It is to "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." I am adoring the blessed God in the consciousness of the relationship which subsists between us.

It is a great thing to feel how ignorant we are, to know how *very far* behind we are. When we look at the Lord's concluding words to His disci-

ples, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them," do they not cheer our hearts? The love He had to His Son? Have you the sense that the Lord is teaching you the love wherewith the Father loves Him?

If you had how could there be on you any traces of vexation or disappointment? You would be overpowered instead of disappointed: you would be surprised at the wonderful bounty of that heart that delights to express itself as fully as it can in every form and in every way. The glory is the measure of everything; the glory is the expression of His own satisfaction.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;" that He may take a room in your heart. As He says: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This is the highest divine thing I can have in this world, and this is the result of knowing the place I am set in in Christ. But it is not only that I know the place, but I know the love of the blessed One who brought me to it; the love that passeth knowledge. The proof that I love Christ is that I keep His commandments. If I really love Him I do the things He likes me to do; and the Father loves me, and they come and take up their abode with me. When Christ dwells in the heart by faith, I am brought

into the length, and breadth, and depth and height; and I know His love which passeth knowledge; and am filled unto all the fulness of God. "Unto him be glory throughout all ages." *There is worship!*

How imperfect the servant of God feels in any attempt to set forth such a subject!

(J. B. S.)

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## SERVICE.

### PHILIPPIANS II.

Now we come to the subject of service down here, while we do not lose the bright scene above. That is the place of retirement from which we are made ready to come forth as servants. We come from God. The failure in service is that people very generally do *not* come to it from God. But for all effectual service we must come from God, and therefore I place service after worship. I come from the joy of the Lord: "As my Father hath sent me so send I you." He was sent into the world, and so are we. We must be out of it before we can be sent into it; and each one is sent with a special vocation, a special mission.

There are three kinds of service:

1. Moral influence.
2. Any kind of acts.
3. Gifts.

There may be service where there is no acting at all but moral influence: "Shine as lights in the world;" that is not doing; it is moral influence. We have all order of service in this chapter, whilst in Ephesians we have more especially gifts.

The first thing to consider is, what is service *now*? If we look at the service of the tabernacle, it was different altogether from what it is now. Service now consists in my being sent out as Christ's deputy to carry out in this world what Christ is. I am placed according to divine grace in the same state as Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God; and I am sent into the world as He was.

Next, what does service aim at? *State.* A true servant is one who will "care for your state." He does not merely do a work for you to satisfy his own conscience, but, as the apostle says, "That I may be of good comfort when I know your state, for I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state." The thought conveyed in the word *naturally*, is that of one who like a relation will care for your state; like a mother with a child, they were on his mind, and the thing before him was their state.

This gives an immense idea of what service is. It is of a new character, and the Lord opens it out in John xiii. That is the first time in which service comes out as a ministry of the word. It is not confined to gifts; it is entirely connected with the state; it consists in removing the thing that interferes with communion. If I wash your feet it is to remove what interferes with your communion; so if I do not know your state I cannot know what interferes with your

communion. This gives a new character to service altogether; it is considering for the state of others.

"The mind of Christ," chapter ii., is the highest state in Philippians; whilst in chapter iv. you cannot do without Him in all the difficulties of the world. Your occupation with Christ is to the end to get help from Him. How am I to get on here? I look to Him, and "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

But in chapter iii. it is very different. Christ is the object of my heart: it is *Himself* I want, not merely His help. Many think they are occupied with Christ when it is only help they want; but if I am occupied simply with Christ, I, of necessity, seek association with Him where He is. That is the mark of real occupation of heart with Christ Himself. It is preposterous for a man to tell me he is occupied with Christ if he does not seek association with Christ where Christ is. Look at the disciples in Acts ii.: "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" Look at Stephen (Acts vii.): "He being full of the Holy Ghost looked up *stedfastly into heaven* and saw Jesus." The heart has got its proper course; the heart has got its proper place. "If ye be risen with Christ seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth." Heaven is in contrast to earth.

Many a person says he is not worldly, who is

very earthly. You might live on the top of a mountain and enjoy yourself, and though you would not be worldly, you might be very earthly. If you are not heavenly, you are earthly. "Set your affections on things *above*." If I am occupied with Christ in the place where He is, I am occupied with His interests where He is not.

Be honest as to what is the character of your occupation with Christ. One child says, "I cannot *do* without my mother." Another child says, "I cannot *enjoy* anything without my mother." We cannot do without Him in daily life, and thank God for it; but, if He is simply my *object*, He is my "*mark*." The moment I see Him, I have got the mark; the very meaning of the word mark is something that I see; and the heart that is occupied with Christ as its object, soon finds out that Christ is its mark.

"The mind of Christ." What was His mind? He was a servant all the way down. He says, I am not counting what it will cost me; I am going to serve; and I go down, down. I become a man, and then I go down as low as a man is to be found, to the very lowest point in which a man could be found; and that is death. *This is service.* "He made himself of no reputation."

We have seen that there are three kinds of service, the first of which is moral influence.

Every one has moral influence either for good or for evil. I may not necessarily be doing anything, but I may be so simply according to the mind of Christ that I am really serving Him. The whole body is full of light when the eye is simple, as the Lord says. The eye is the light of the body. When it takes in the light simply, the whole body is luminous; no part is dark. He says: I do not ask you all to preach, but I do ask you all to be living exponents of ME morally on earth. It is not what you say or do, but what you *are*. The whole body is to be full of light. And you cannot be the exponent of anything, if it has not had effect on yourself.

The body is the Lord's possession (and in this sense He chastens it); is a member of Christ; and is a light here for Christ—an exhibition of the grace of Christ. How often is it anything but that! How the fashionable attire shews that He is not there! Christ has been rejected from this world, but He would have thousands of bodies shedding forth His light. All light in the world comes from the sun. We are to be like the moon borrowing all our light from our absent Sun, and shedding it forth here where He is rejected. The outside is indicative of what is inside. As the Psalmist says, "He setteth himself in a way that is not good;" and the spring of this is, "he abhorreth not evil."



In Luke xi. we have the body full of light ; and in chapter xii. the Lord turns to His disciples and shews what the light is ; and here there are two negatives : no fear and no care. And what then ? The positive : " Seek the kingdom of God." And then, " Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning."

There is no fear : " Fear not them that kill the body." Stephen did not fear them who kill the body ; and his body was luminous. If there is no fear of man, there will be confession of Christ. That is the practical action from it.

Then as to no care. It is not no *toil*, but no *care*. " Consider the ravens." The raven goes to roost at night without a single care on its head ; but it is not a lazy bird. Toil is good, it never does any one harm, but care corrodes. Toil subdues a person. As the Psalmist says, " He brought down their heart with labour."

" That Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." What service can there be in death ? " *That Christ may be magnified.*" The body is to be illumined with divine light. In a prison or a desert island you might be this. The angels see him, though none other does. In a scene where God's Son has been rejected, there has been the most wonderful defeat ever met with by Satan ; a defeat achieved by the presence of the body of Christ on earth. Christ has gone, but instead of one body there

should be millions now on earth, of which the angels can say as they look down, All those luminaries down there are exemplifications of the grace of Christ!

Peter says that unbelieving husbands may be "won by the conversation of the wives." This shews us the character of light in domestic life. "*Without the word*, won by the conversation of the wife." There is moral influence; the moral influence of a meek and lowly spirit. A man may say when he comes home: What an extraordinary difference between the bustling world and the life I have to do with here! Now *all* have the opportunity for shewing a meek and lowly spirit. It is interesting to see that it is always the highest kind of service which is within the reach of everybody.

The second kind of service is any kind of acts. In Romans xii. acts and gifts are put together. We get the practice suited to the teaching, and now, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice." Read verses 6-8 and you will find seven things including every act of service. The seventh is, "Shewing mercy with cheerfulness." That is within the reach of all, and it is the highest. It is far higher in its moral character than the first gift—prophecy. I should rather have the seventh without the first than the first without the seventh.

We read in 1 Corinthians xii., "Yet shew I

unto you a more excellent way." That way we find in the following chapter: *charity*. Charity is the nature of Christ; and it is necessary for the highest gifts. The most useful machine will not get on without oil. If a man with a gift has not the nature with which to use the gift, people are hindered and tried by him. Charity is more negative in its character than positive. It begins with oneself, not with others. The saying is, "Charity begins at home," and it is true; it begins with number one.

I must have two things before I can do acts of service: 1. The nature; charity. 2. I must know the person's state whom I desire to serve, and must think of it. I keep the state of the patient's health before me. If you indulge a child you increase his selfishness. I have to consider his state and to check his selfishness.

You find, as a rule, that women are more effective than men in service, not to numbers, but to individuals. When they get into a company, I doubt it; but they are most useful in visiting, and to individuals; see the united service of Priscilla and Aquila. A servant knows little if he thinks he never got help from a woman in the Lord. I respect God's order. Angels are looking on at the church, and the woman is to have power on her head because of the angels.

I do not lose my enjoyment in my gift because

I have not the precise gift that another person has. Every one ought to feel, I am sent into the world by God, and I have to serve Him in it. I am not sent merely to be a master or a servant, but to be a missionary of Christ. If God puts me into different social positions, such as a slave, a master, &c., this only conduces to my service to Him, as the banks of a river define its course. But if I put myself into them, I run dry like a canal.

In Romans xii. we have the responsibility side of the gifts, therefore it is not only the gifts, but it comes down to acts of mercy. But in Ephesians iv. we get gifts from the head of the church to His body, gifts from an ascended Lord, gifts from *heaven*, and they are to be true to their source. If I get a gift from a certain scene, that scene marks it, and here the gift comes to me, not from any one on *earth*, but from One in *heaven*. The gift of an evangelist comes from heaven, and therefore it must have a heavenly aspect. You get it from heaven, and you should maintain the colour of whence it came. If the gift is in keeping with its character, it is in keeping with an ascended Lord. It is not a question of only getting souls out of the world; the evangelist has a divine mission to carry light into the darkness, and he must remember where that light came from, and give it out according to

where it started from. All is for the good of the church, and you must go back to where you started from to get power for the gift. A pastor knows the state of souls, and ministers to that. A prophet brings the word suited to the state, though he may not know it. This is the most effective ministry. A teacher does not necessarily know the state.

You ask, How would a person know his gift? I believe that in some distinct way the Lord makes it known to your heart. When Christ revealed Himself to Paul, He says, "For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;" and in Colossians i. 23, 25 he says, that two ministries had been committed to him, a ministry of the gospel, and a ministry of the church. If the gifted one comes forth as Christ's minister, the ministry connects itself with Christ, whatever it is.

If I have found the silver piece, the question is, what have I done with it? I answer, He must be joined to the Lord where the other nine are. I do not say go to any meeting, but come to Christ. A step in the right direction is often dangerous, for people are satisfied they have done a good thing, and then are inclined to stop there. They say, perhaps, that they are out of system, or that they are

looking for the Lord's people. I answer, If you find the Head in heaven, you will soon find His members here. If you know what belongs to Him, you will know where to be here.

The first sphere of interest that occupies every true-hearted person is the church, when it comes to a question of serving Christ. I do not find any one clear as to judgment who does not make the church the first object of his attention. The church must be my object because it is Christ's object. Where shall I find Christ's heart? In John I read: "Love one another *as I have loved you.*" In Ephesians, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit." It comes before domestic relations. If you fail in the church, you will surely fail at home.

We read: "The Spirit and the bride say come." There I am looking simply at Christ, and my heart says to Him, "Come." Then I drop down and say, "Let him that heareth say, Come;" and then I go out to the utmost bounds of the earth as I say, "Let him that is *athirst*"—not *satisfied*—"come, and *whosoever will*, let him take the water of life freely." Where do I come from with these blessed invitations? I come from saluting the heart of Christ. I salute the Morning Star. I say *first* to Him, "*come.*" Then I turn round, and go out to the utmost bounds of the earth: I long that all should come: "*Whosoever will*, let him come."

The Lord grant that each one of us may be so faithful to Christ's heart and interests here, that we may know what suits Him, down to the very lowest, smallest, minutest interest connected with ourselves in our daily circumstances.

(J. B. S.)

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## DISCIPLINE.

### HEBREWS XII.

I PLACE discipline after service, for in the very service itself God makes the servant fit to carry it out. A person is first disciplined for service, and then in the service he is made fit by it for the character of it. God has not servants ready made. He makes them fit for His own service in connection with the race they have to run. The word "chasten" is the same as that used in Ephesians with respect to bringing up the children: it is *nurture*. We attach too much the idea of severity, of retribution, to it.

In service there are three kinds:

1. Moral influence.
2. Works.
3. Gifts.

In moral influence the body is light, and this is a testimony to God. For instance, the wife in 1 Peter iii.: the husband to be won without a single word.

The subject before us this evening, discipline, is almost too large a one to grasp; but, as the Lord enables me, I will just point out the principal lines God works in from passages of Scripture.



God has us in hand all through from babyhood. Look at Moses. You get the character of what his life is to be from the very first; when a babe in the ark of bulrushes, we read, "the babe wept." He was a man of sorrows all through his course, and a man peculiarly cared for—an object to God all through. Even when a babe God had a thought about him, and in the same way God never takes His eye off you (I am not speaking of conversion), He has had you in training all through. He has a different line of things for every one, and each of us has been sent into this world for some special mission. It is not a question whether it is great or small; it may be only a flower to shed fragrance; though this is really the greatest of all.

There is nothing higher than moral influence; "the body full of light;" and this, of the highest moral order, is within the compass of all. The apostle Paul speaks of it in Philippians i. as the very highest thing to attain to: "Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." What works are there in death? *None*, but to be an exhibition of what Christ was.

In Psalm lxxviii. it says: "He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheep-folds; he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance." The great thing to remember is, that every one has to be taught, to be prepared. You do not come forth ready to hand

for God's service. Man has not instinct as animals have; he requires to be educated in natural things; and if he has to be educated for common things, how much more for God! how much more does he need to be suited to His hand! And it is not mere education of mind, but the vessel must be made and prepared by God for Himself.

There are two great lines of discipline. The first is scourging—a thorough *breakdown*. A man will never get on until he gets a thorough breakdown. It is not a question of being true, but of being broken.

Look at Jacob. God wrestles with him, for he is not broken down yet, though he has been twenty years in Syria, and has come back to the land, and now God wrestles with him to break down his will. All of us have to be broken down. It is very happy when it is *not* because of failure like Peter. He was broken down when he found by failure what a wretched creature he was. Jacob had been twenty years in banishment; he was a deceiver himself, and he was ten times deceived: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

But when he is broken down, he gets the blessing. What a blessed thing! He is fit for blessing now; he was not before. Look at this very active man. When the sun was up that man *halted*. At the rising of the sun—the very

thing that would call out all his latent energies—he has to *halt*. I am crippled, he says, I cannot go on; I am a crippled man. He is sensible of his own inability. A broken man is a blessed man. It is most acceptable in God's sight. It is not that He likes my suffering, but He makes me suffer in order to bless me. The blessing is more than equivalent to the suffering; *much more*. Jacob, though he halted, had the right side of the thing. I am crippled, he says, but *now* you will bless me.

Turn to Genesis xxxv. 8, where there is discipline of another order. We get discipline under different heads. In Genesis xxxv. the discipline is of the order of Hebrews xii. Jacob has at last come to the right spot, Bethel. Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, dies. The last remnant of his mother must go. It is the oak of weeping. There is discipline of this kind now, in order to be more fit for service.

Afterwards he loses Rachel and Joseph, the two he cares for most. These two, God says, I take from you, and the result is that his is the most distinguished death-bed we read of in Scripture except Stephen's. He has the threefold blessing, the wonderful combination of being a worshipper; of having no hope as to earth; and of being free to think of others. He says, "*As for me Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan.*" I have not a link to earth. God is his object,

and his heart is so free that it can flow out to others. He blessed the children of Joseph, and declared the mind of God for them.

Moses is another interesting case. It took forty years to break him down, though at the start he made a very great sacrifice for the Lord. He was brought up as Pharaoh's son, but he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." You might say, That man will get no discipline; he does not want it. But no; he thinks he can do the work of the Lord in a human way, and he must get forty years of discipline in the wilderness, and after that he is quite timid about himself, too timid indeed to speak. *Now* the Lord starts him as His servant, and another kind of discipline comes in; for he is disciplined *for* a servant and *as* a servant; the discipline is *in* the service to fit him *for* the service; and it continues all through his course; his own family find fault with him; the people murmur against him; one thing after another until at last he dies on mount Pisgah, and does not go into the land at all.

God says, I want to get rid of every shred of the flesh in you. That is the object of discipline. He purges on the principle of "we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake." In service you are sure to find some kind of pressure on you. It may be on your body, and

often is ; or it may be persecution ; but you will hardly ever have an interesting field of service before you, unless you are crippled for it. "He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

Look at Jonah the servant of God. First he is a broken man, and then he is a man made fit for God to use. Jonah at first tried to evade God's path ; he was afraid of it ; and he was brought into the depths of the sea. The thing you are trying to avoid you will fall into. If you strive with God He takes from you what you want to keep. Samson's wife told his secret to save her father's house, and her father's house was burnt. God brought Jonah out, but it is as a man who is sensible of the plight he has brought himself into. People think they learn that when they learn Romans vii. ; but long after Romans vii. you may have to learn that you are worth nothing ; a dog, like the Syrophenician woman.

Jonah comes up out of the sea, and the Lord says to him : "Arise, go up to Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." Is he done with discipline now ? No ; there is a new kind now : the gourd dies. This is to make him more fit for God's service. The Lord uses it as an occasion to acquaint him with His heart. He says, You felt for that gourd ; do you not think I feel for the people ? The moment God explains His mind we hear no

more of it. Peter was self-confident; he said he would follow the Lord to prison and to death, and he broke down from fear. People break down when they are most self-confident. In the end Peter died for the Lord. What kind of discipline is that? The entire clearance of everything. Stephen was thus disciplined in the **very** act of dying; those stones, as one **has** said, liberated him from the last shred of the flesh; and he goes into **what** Christ's work has won for him.

**In** Hebrews xii. the object of discipline is that we may be partakers of God's holiness. In the Father's discipline we suffer in all circumstances. In the Lord's chastening we suffer in the body; the body is the Lord's. There are two lines of discipline: the first is, that you must be broken before you can serve truly; the second is the discipline which fits you for running the race. There are four kinds of suffering in discipline. The first of these is governmental. For instance, a man suffering in health, on account of his ancestors. In this suffering the person knows it, because he gets sympathy from the Lord. The Jewish remnant suffer because of what their fathers did, and they receive the sympathy of Christ. They inherit the penalties of the nation, and that entitles them to Christ's care, and they participate in the wonderful sympathies of Christ's own heart. A man may suffer governmentally who has a poor weak constitution on

account of his ancestors ; he may suffer in health, property or the like.

The second kind of suffering is of a painful character. Christ chastens us because of our indifference in calling to mind His death. How do I know that I am suffering for this ? I believe that, if we are suffering on account of levity at the Lord's table, there will be a sense of reserve on the Lord's part. Would not a child know if its parent rebuked it ? If I suffer for levity at that sacred moment when my heart ought to be occupied with Christ's sufferings on my behalf, I get *censure*. The Lord has a controversy with me, which He would not have were my suffering governmental, for then I should on the contrary get His sympathy.

The third kind of suffering is for my profit, and then I get God turning that suffering to good account for myself, to help me on in the race. When you get rid of the gourd like Jonah, or of the nurse like Jacob, you get on better. It is God's way to help you in the race.

The fourth is when you are actually suffering in the Lord's service, like Epaphroditus in Philippians ii. : " For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life." You get honours for this : " If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." John in Patmos, Joseph in prison, are instances of this. Here suffering is not for having done anything wrong, and not

to enable them to run the race, but simply for serving the Lord. You may get a cold in service or an illness of any kind, and the Lord will use it for an opportunity of making known to you how much He thinks about you; so that instead of its being lost time when you are shut up in your room, you will find it is a time when He will give you communications from Himself which make it worth getting that cold or that illness. Paul, when he was shut up in prison for the Lord's service, was given communications of His mind, and when you are suffering in body for His service you will find that He has communications to give you which will make you praise Him for the suffering.

There is some suffering which is retributive. God never remits what a man deserves, though He may meet him in it. When the thief on the cross is converted, he does not get off the gibbet. He is going to paradise truly, but that does not remove the judgment that is on him here; his legs are broken; it but sends him the quicker to heaven, but still he had to bear it. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If you expose yourself indifferently to climate you get ill. If you are unkind to a person, some one will be unkind to you: "With what measure ye mete it will be measured to you again." "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."



In Hebrews xii. the apostle accounts the race as a practical thing. Self-denial is not self-vexation; it is denying yourself the thing that you like. If you would like to say a sharp thing, do not say it; deny yourself. That is the true mark of a person that is broken, denying himself the thing that he likes.

In Peter we read, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin: that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." I have a new study now. **Everything** that is put aside in the cross I **am not** to allow in me; the old thing is **not** to be allowed to work in me; I have a new thing in me, the rose, and that is only fit for the sunlight. What am I to do with the briar? I am not to allow it to grow at all.

When a man is thoroughly broken he never forgets that he is. The way to break in a horse is not to wound his mouth, but to bring a pressure on the nerves, and the whole system yields to the pressure; every nerve is under hand, and he has the sense that he is controlled, not wounded. To carry this out, I deny the flesh. The flesh would like that, then I will not have it. I "cease from sin." It may be some pet inclination: I should like to go to some place. Shall I gratify it or deny it? Peter gratified his inclina-

tion, and the devil was in it. He did not see the devil in it, but he was there. "Stolen waters are sweet." You may say, I was led there providentially; but you may always be afraid of the thing that proposes gratification; the foolish woman proposes something that pleases.

In running a race every single thing of the flesh hinders, and must go. Whether it be a river or a wall, or *anything* that comes in the way, I must go the road that Christ went, like a dog following his master. Whatever the difficulties of the race may be, I can go through every single thing that opposes me, because He went through it; He has gone before. You are never right in the race if you do not start in this way. Give up every thing of self-gratification. I am not occupied with the suffering, I am occupied with a much more wonderful thing, I am going on with divine enthusiasm in this wonderful pathway that is marked out for me.

In running the race that is set before us, there are two things to be laid aside. The first is every weight; the second is sin. The first is outside; the second is inside. Is it any particular sin? No; it is not your besetting sin, but sin is there, ready to come up. It ought not to come up, and therefore God helps us. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin." I have not died yet, and sin is there; it is what is in the flesh.

If you ask, What weight am I to put off? I cannot tell you. Begin to run, and then you will soon find out what clogs you. God keeps us and chastens us all through. It is *nurture*. He is not hard, He wants us to be partakers of His holiness. How do I know it is this kind of chastening? It is if I am exercised about it. It is "unto them which are exercised thereby." I am looking to the Lord about it. I ask Him, What is this for now? I am exercised as to it, and "Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness." It is a remarkable passage.

It is because of the hindrance in me that I get the chastening. I am put in possession of the fruition of righteousness. It may be the nurse to Jacob, or the gourd to Jonah, or Jerusalem to Paul. Whatever it is, it is taken out of the way; and if we are exercised we get the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Jerusalem is gone; Paul's heart was set on it once, but it is gone now, and he longs to depart; his heart is set on Christ; it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

We run the race looking unto Jesus, therefore there must be faith. That is the actual support I have; everything depends on *faith*. People in the right path have light, plenty of it, but not faith; therefore they turn to human arrangements. Lot was in the right path, and the ten spies, but they had not faith. You may be in

the place of light and not have faith, and if so, you will be always attempting to get the clue through the arrangement of circumstances. The man of faith uses circumstances, but is not influenced by them. Exercise makes the heart turn more to God.

The only power in the race is faith. Chapter xi. is not examples of faith, but traits of faith. The heart understands what a wonderful power it is set on. I may have to die on the road, but it only finishes the race for me.

He adds, "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, my son, *despise* not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor *faint* when thou art rebuked of him." These are two things very important. I am not to despise the chastening, like a duck in the rain, indifferent to it, braving as it were everything; neither am I to "faint when rebuked of him," like a hen in the rain, which is a miserable object. I am neither to be miserable nor indifferent, but thoughtful and exercised.

The Lord lead our hearts practically to know what it is to be under His hand, and to answer to His desires for us. Amen.

(J. B. S.)

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## TESTIMONY.

JOHN xvii.; EPHESIANS iv.

THESE two Scriptures contain a very different character of instruction. The first, John xvii., is the Lord's mind about us; the second, Ephesians iv., is our responsibility in connection with knowing His desires about us. It is direct responsibility in Ephesians iv.; entirely our own responsibility. It does not give the motive, and is not the side which affects the heart, as in John xvii. Here the Lord is going away, and He is thinking of what we are to be on the earth where He is not; He looks up to heaven, and expresses His desires for us.

It is interesting to mark the difference between Paul and John. Paul connects us with Christ in heaven; John declares Him in the present scene. In John xvii. the first thing is, how we are to answer to Him here; how we are to know our true place. It describes a person who is in the testimony, which is our subject to-night.

What is the testimony? The testimony, in one sentence, is, that Christ's body is here while He is in heaven; it is fed and nurtured by Himself, in His state and spirit, but His place in heaven

is its place also. Now if you are in the testimony you are a witness, and a witness, or a soldier, is one who adheres to it; he is not ashamed of it, he is a soldier of the cross; he comes out a new person in the clothes—the uniform—of it. Practically Christ's state and Christ's place together form my uniform, give me a heavenly aspect, until He comes or sends for me.

To be in the testimony, it is not a question of whether I feel I am saved. If I do not, of course I cannot be in it; but to be a witness or soldier I must be fitted for it. Figuratively speaking, a man must be enlisted as a soldier, he must be admitted to the ranks; and, when he is, he does not appear in plain clothes; he has a new character, and is not ashamed of it. So I am not ashamed of my calling.

The first thing is, that Christ's state at the right hand of God is my state here. The Lord has been in this world for us; He is now in the presence of the Father. His state there is my state here.

The second thing is, that He sets me as Himself in the presence of the world. If you visit the poor, or preach the gospel, or whatever you do, do not go in plain clothes; go as a soldier, as a witness for Christ. What practically hinders the testimony is, that people go into the world without this uniform on; they go forth, not as here for Christ, but for the good of man. You

ought not to be ashamed of your colours, of your calling; you must not lose your place for Christ when you preach the gospel; you are not here objectively to serve man, but for Him. The excuse made is, that we must come down to souls. If you do, you have lost the testimony. Christ never did, though He was the most genial of men. A slave may bring glory to Christ; he may "adorn the doctrine of our Saviour God in all things." Does he give up the colours? No, he maintains them.

It is said, the unity is broken up. Am I therefore to give up the colours? The true remnant always clings to the colours. It is no question of how feeble we are, or how scattered and broken; but do not give up the colours; do not give up the truth that should characterise you at this time; do not give up what is in the heart of Christ. There may be only one man left of a regiment, but he has the colours; and that is what the remnant is. You cannot arrive at the true action of the remnant unless you first know what the testimony is in itself. There is no use in calling on a person to advance if he does not know what to advance to. True, we shall have difficulties to contend with; but, however feeble we are, let us not give up what is dear to the heart of Christ.

In John xvii. we have the expression of the heart of Christ, and it is a summing up of the

truth connected with testimony ; whilst in Ephesians iv. it is our direct relationship. In chap. xiii. the Lord is going away from the earth. In chapter xiv. He tells of the coming of the Holy Ghost. A divine Person has come down to earth, and is residing here. There is nothing really less believed in than this, and the very levity we witness every day shews that people do not believe in such a thing. As to His presence there is nothing to shew. In Old Testament times there was. There was then no appearance of God without a glare ; but now there is nothing for sight. Why ? Because flesh is ignored and not appealed to at all. Faith is appealed to. The Holy Ghost is unseen, unknown, and practically repelled.

In chap. xiv. 26, the Comforter is sent by the Father *in Christ's name*. His presence is connected with Christ's name here on earth. We are left in the world in this lonely condition in the absence of Christ, but we are not left uncared for ; the Comforter is sent to us from the Father. But in chap. xv. we are not only lonely and in solitude here, because the Lord has gone away, but we are opposed ; we are hated by the world, and then we get : " But when the Comforter is come, whom *I* will send unto you from the Father [Christ sends Him now] . . . he shall *testify of me*." Thus we get the testimony, because in the face of the opposition, the testimony



comes out; and the testimony is not of the church, but of Christ: "He shall testify of me."

When we come to look at the church, when we consider the component parts of this wonderful structure, how mixed up they are with levity and unbelief! Only the living members have got power, for power is only to faith. But, amidst all the failure, it is an immense thing to know that the Lord's mind has not altered about the church because of the general break up. I look to the Lord to get real moral power to stand up for Him where He was rejected, to wear the divine uniform. I come out in a divine uniform to stand for the Lord in the place where my Lord stood for me; and the more we are for the Lord, the more we co-operate with one another. It is a wonderful fact in the church of God, that the nearer we get to God, the nearer we get to Christ, the nearer we get to one another; and the more we find that we are bound up in the bundle of life, the more we co-operate with one another.

There are three things in John xvii. connected with the heart of Christ:—

1. What He gives.
2. What He is doing or has done.
3. What He desires.

John did not get orders to write this till long after the break up of the church; not until after

Paul had written 2 Timothy. The Lord's mind and feeling about the church had not altered because the church had not acted according to its responsibilities here; and so He tells us of His reserves. In warfare the reserve is the spare forces and ammunition; it is the base of operations; it tells us what the heart of Christ is. The most wonderful thing for me as a soldier of the cross down here is to know what backs me, the base I have.

The first thing is eternal life. (Ver. 2.) This is not only a new state or a new condition, but it meets everything. Eternal life is given. It is not a life that can enjoy earthly things at all, its characteristic is, that it puts me in a new position, it brings me into another scene of interest altogether, to what is natural to me. The apostle Paul lost his sight; he was blind to everything here for three days. When he got the Holy Ghost he got his sight back: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." But, as to things here, we groan inwardly, like a bird in a cage. This body is to be kept under, in order to be according to His pleasure who wrought redemption for it. People condemn Wesleyans, whilst they are really often doing the same thing themselves; that is, trying to improve the old nature, not seeing that the man in Christ is an entirely new thing. If we would let the Lord choose for us, He would choose circumstances, climate, friends, relations,

everything, for our ultimate benefit; but this is not eternal life. We must rise out of all this, and soar away to the realms of divine glory; we must rise up into acquaintance with God.

It says in John: "He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and in Romans we get: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." What is the difference between an unconverted man and this? It is that Christ lives in the latter; so that he can say: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It is a wonderful thing to start with. People have a very faint idea of what eternal life is, we are not in the full enjoyment of it yet—of "the end everlasting life." The body is not swallowed up of life yet; but Christ is our life; and "When Christ our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." We cannot measure the dimensions of it. People talk of final perseverance in connection with eternal life; but it is the height of it that is before us, not the length.

The second thing which he gives is "the words." "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me;" the actual communications of God's mind. It is not simply that I have got a new character of existence, a capacity to enjoy God, but I have got another thing; I have got intelligence.

Thirdly, He gives us the counsel of God: "I have given them thy word." What is the difference between these two gifts? The words are the actual communications of His mind; the word is the counsel itself.

The fourth thing He gives is the glory. (Ver. 22.) "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." This is not His essential glory, it is the glory He was entitled to as a man. Thus there are four things which He gives, and these four form the base of operations. Is that the way you are going to face this world?

2. What He is *doing*, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves;" and—"I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." I cannot delay to put them all in order, but as we go over the beautiful divine narrative, it cannot but elicit divine melody in your hearts. "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me!" Think what it is to know that love down here! "No man goeth a warfare at his own charges!"

3. What Christ *desires*. His chief desire is that we should all be one. This desire is the most characteristic. His desire is not unity merely, but all of one mind, of one accord. There is no thought more cheering to the heart than to think that in heaven there will never be a clash of judgment; there will be variety of service, but

no variety of opinion ; and there would not be now, if it were not for the world in us. The moment I differ from a brother, the world is very strong in either me or him, or in both. If it were not, we should be of the same mind. We are not to agree to differ, that is not the testimony. I cannot accept it, though I suffer from it. It should be the same mind, same judgment, perfectly joined together. He desires that we should be one as the Father and He are one. We all know that where there is no congeniality of mind, there is always grating of the affections. Different dispositions do together ; different tastes do not. Tastes must agree. As we sing : " All the mind of heaven is one."

The Father and the Son never had any difference ; it is profanity to think of such a thing. We are very far from this oneness, but we are not going to give it up on that account. This desire is the greatest.

Then there are two others. There is the negative side : " I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." This gives great confidence in praying for sick saints.

Then in verse 17 we have the third desire : " Sanctify them through thy truth." These two last, to be kept from the evil, and to be sanctified through the truth promote His chief desire—that they should be one. A person who desires to

keep the testimony is kept from the evil ; and the positive side of it is, he is sanctified through the truth. Sanctification is of a very large character : " Sanctified through the truth." The truth is the knowledge of the Father. Thus it is a question of relationship. Two things effect sanctification : 1, I belong to another generation altogether ; 2, that the One I belong to has gone out of this world : " The world knoweth us not."

If we really saw what is the manner of His love, we should take courage because of it. As the Lord gives one heart, one has confidence in Him to encourage others, and in company with his fellows such an one can say ; Come on ; let us be more sanctified. And so we contribute to His great desire, that we should be one. In this day there is a great cry for unity ; everything is to give way to unity. That is a wrong statement ; it loses the divine character of unity. Romanism makes great boast of unity ; and the Evangelical Alliance is simply an effort to obtain unity by agreeing to differ. That is not the unity of John xvii. There we are united by the Spirit of God ; it is the character of the unity between the Father and the Son. What is abroad in Christendom is the false declaration of this great thing where apostasy will spring up.

How can I promote the unity of John xvii. ?

By being kept from the evil, and sanctified through the truth. We are sanctified after a double manner. The more you are in the power of these two, the more you will help those you serve. You must not desert the colours because they present Christ; you must not desert the ranks—truth. The saddest thing of all is the cry for unity—brotherly love, without consideration for Christ. I am prepared for that cry every day; we meet it on all sides. But unity without Christ is not unity according to God's mind.

The more we get hold of what Christ's desires are, the more we discover our own responsibility. We are responsible according to what our resources are. I see what He gives, does and desires, and my responsibility flows from that.

In Ephesians I find that I am a member of the body of Christ. What a wonderful position! What a holy calling! The body is here, but its place is not here; its place is where His is. That is the calling: "He hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places." If you want to know its characteristics *believe in it*. Thus will you have Christ dwelling in your heart by faith, "that ye may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth know-

ledge." You cannot get any further. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

Have you a cloud on your soul? Do you think if you knew something of your place in heaven you would have a cloud on your soul? Never! You were dead when Christ raised you; that mighty power came down to the extremity of man's weakness! The soul is touched with the magnitude of divine power! And I must know the power first, in order to walk in it.

We have a place in heaven; we are members of the body of Christ; we are bound together by one Spirit; Christ is the Head in heaven. We are the body on earth. The earth is not our place; heaven is our place; we are Christ's body on earth. Be true to your life, then. You must begin from above. If you do not, if the first circle is defective, you will be defective in all. This is where all the practical difficulty lies. If you find a man defective respecting this great purpose of his existence, he is defective in every circumstance of his life down here. The first circle is not my family. Do I neglect my family because I have got this circle? No; I attend to it better: I act like Christ in it.

There is nothing so practical. I have a place in heaven, and I come down here and find my place in the body of Christ. Some say, Keep a



little bit of the world in order to win the world. If occupied with service, you are like a person standing on a shore, and landing people on it. If you are obliged to be a little bit in the world in order to help people out of it, then I say you give up your uniform. The nearer you keep to your uniform the better. You are a heavenly man; the place that belongs to you is heaven; you are a heavenly man set in Christ's body on earth. You must have on your uniform, and not come out in plain clothes. That is the great point of the Spirit of God: "He shall testify of *me*," and the great opposition of Satan is against the body of Christ on earth. I must let it be known to whom I belong. The great moral meaning of the uniform is, I am a heavenly man. You ask, What am I to do? Go to the Lord, He will lead you out; you will be drawn out of the world without knowing how. It is not a question of getting out of it, but of practically learning the place of the glorified Saviour. "He shall testify of *me*."

The first mark of this is "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit." The great opposition of Satan is against the body of Christ. Do you really believe that His body is on earth? What gives you a depth of interest in a person? Because he is a member of the body of Christ. Has your soul got a sense that His body is on earth? Few know more than that it is broken up.

But you will never be right if you do not go back to the original, and maintain it.

The Lord give us to know His delight in seeing us faithful to Himself in a scene where He was so faithful to us.

(J. B. S.)

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## THE REMNANT.

1 SAM. VII.; 2 TIM. III., IV. 1-8.

THE first mark of an enlightened soul is, that he sees how contrary to God are the things with which he is mixed up; and we may trace the same thing working in the church, that is working in the world. The scoffer says, "Where is the promise of his coming?" The professor says, "My Lord delayeth his coming."

The first action of light is that which doth make manifest. It is a principle with God that He does not give truth to a person unless he seeks it: "He that seeketh, findeth." People can be on the very same ground, and go on outwardly with saints, who are not there in faith; therefore, when a time of pressure comes, instead of helping, they are in the way; they contribute weakness instead of help; they have no vital power. Lot was on the right ground, but not in faith; he was entirely guided by his sense; and in the end he suffered from it; while Abraham had faith and got the blessing. There is a path: the Lord says, "I am the way." A mariner cannot do anything without the sun; he must know his bearings. In Timothy things had got

very difficult, but Paul still says, "The Lord stood with me."

We find these two things in Scripture: that we get deliverance where we get comfort. These two go together: "He delivered me because he delighted in me." Thus I overcome all my enemies. I have not only the comfort of the Lord's presence, but He is at my right hand. Whenever you are fed you are guided; the manna and the cloud always go together. The Lord said to the disciples, "Have ye any meat?" that is, He challenges them. The soul that is not walking with the Lord is not receiving from Him. He delights to impart. The soul that is walking with Him is always in the sense of receiving from Him.

The church has fallen from its original position, but the testimony remains the same. A perfectly novel thing is introduced, unique and marvelously grand, exceeding anything seen or expected among men. Christ is in heaven but His body is on earth, and that body is the wonderful divine illustration of His beauty now on earth that He is not here. Our hearts weep over the ruin and disaster of the church of God; but are we going to hang down our hands? No. The Epistle to Timothy was written to him who was at Ephesus. What did the true ones of the Lord do, when awakened to a sense of the declension and ruin? One thing always characterised the remnant:

they never gave up the cardinal truth ; and God grant that it may characterise us. Though reduced, it may be to one person, there is no surrender by the true remnant of the truth which is to characterise the period. The colours of the regiment are the last things that are parted with. Never surrender them.

We read in Isaiah vi. of "a tenth" that was to be left ; a remnant that was to be preserved, "as a teil-tree and as an oak, whose substance is in them. When they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof." There is nothing outward, nothing conspicuous ; it is the outward thing which is the great trammel in the present day. What people want is usefulness, something to shew, without devotedness. It is like the Pharisaic element, which was the great hindrance to our blessed Lord when He was on earth.

The support of the remnant is, "*I know thy works.*" It is substance, but no leaves. There is nothing conspicuous ; no eye sees it ; but the substance is there. The first time the Lord came into the temple, He was met by an old man and an old woman, Simeon and Anna ; one a sample of energy, the other of condition ; both of them cleaving to the things that belonged to God. "*She departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*" She set forth the condition of the remnant of that day ; and it is

very useful and interesting for us to see what her *base* was. It was clinging with pertinacity to the last remnant of what belonged to God on earth. Is that the thing which you desire should characterise you, clinging to what belongs to Christ on earth ?

The last thing the Lord met with when He was leaving the temple, was a poor widow, casting into the treasury her two mites, giving all her substance to what was dear to God on earth. That was real devotedness, for she gave her *all*. What is the good of anything if it does not produce effect ? There is no value in intelligence if it does not produce action ; what is of value is the orderly acts of a vigorous constitution, not the convulsive efforts of an excited mind.

See what was the character of the remnant of that day ! Are we going to surpass it ? What is really our course of action ? Christ's body is here maintained by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, but there is nothing to *see*. In 1 Timothy there was something to see. The church was to be seen then : "The pillar and ground of the truth." Now there is nothing to point at. My father in Christ could not point me to the church ; it is all in ruin. What is to be done ? Am I going to give up the truth that Christ's body is here ? In this state of things what can I do ?

Now Samuel is in keeping with the present

state of things. There I find opposition, confusion, and no power whatever; but there is the invisible power and dependence on that; there is dependence on God. Samuel brought in this. He was the last deliverer of the people. Between Joshua and Samuel there had been the Judges. The people had got mixed up with their enemies, and were in bondage to them, and God had come in with deliverers in the Judges. These Judges used means which were not at all creditable: the knife, the hammer, the ox-goad; every kind of expedient, instead of the simple ram's horn (Josh. vi.), was used. Now a new order comes in with Samuel; he returns to the first order; he returns to trust in God. The invisible power of God marked the beginning of the period in Joshua's time, and Samuel returns to this invisible power; not through any human expedient, but through prayer and fasting.

The church is Christ's body on earth, sustained by an invisible power; for though the Lord is *not* here, the Holy Ghost *is* here. Therefore, amidst all the ruin, I return to the first thing, to simple dependence on Him; and, if it is real, I get the effect of it: I get a token from Him. The Holy Ghost is here to maintain Christ's body in everything according to the mind of Christ. In Ephesians iv. the first thing is "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." If I fail in this, I fail in everything else. The

Philistine in the land is what hinders the testimony now ; people are baffled and overcome, although on the right ground : they are weakened there by the thing that hinders the testimony, ecclesiastical laxity. It is not immorality ; that would carry no weight ; but ecclesiastical laxity.

There is plenty of usefulness, but it has usurped the place of devotedness. Men can commend the former ; but the heart of Christ values the latter above everything. I am not speaking against usefulness, but what is in vogue is more a convulsive activity which gains reputation among men, than the real service which is the result of a vigorous constitution. People have so little really to do with God, that they live on reputation ; so much so that many would be found who would doubt their own conversion if you were to say to them, "You are not converted !" There is a Pharisaism in this day, which, while adhering to the service and usefulness which commends in the sight of men, disregards the weightier matters of unworldliness and devotedness.

There have always been two companies on the same line ; both of them are on the right ground, but one is on it in faith, the other *only* in sense. Thus was it with Abram and Lot. Both were in the land, on God's ground, but one was the man of faith, the other the man of sense. Thus too with Moses and Aaron. They were



brothers, and had the same truth, and were together in the service of God ; but when one, the man of faith, was up in the mount with God, the other, the man of sense, was making a molten calf. Thus was it again with the twelve spies : all of them went together to see the land, and all testify to its goodness ; but ten of them say that, though there never was a finer country, it is better not to touch it. Whatever comes in with determination to crush the true thing for Christ on earth, that is the Philistine. The great hindrance to the testimony in the present day is ecclesiastical laxity. It crops up everywhere ; we are hindered and embarrassed by it.

We learn clearly in the word of God what we ought to do—what is the counsel of God. The first thing, as we see in Samuel, is separation from false gods ; but it is not all. One of the things we suffer from at the present moment is a belief that separation from systems is the testimony. It is the first step to it, but it is not everything ; it is only a means to an end. The testimony is, that the blessed One has gone from the scene, and has left us here to maintain His interests on the earth. We are called, not only to separate from systems, but to introduce in marked lines and colours the life and ways of that blessed One, rejected from this scene ; we are called to the maintenance through the Holy Ghost of the beauty, ways and works of

Christ here on earth, in spite of every adverse influence.

"The children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth;" but they are not in the testimony yet. Then there are prayer and fasting. There is never real prayer without fasting; and by this I mean not fasting from food, but from *your own will*. That is a much greater thing than fasting from food. There are but few people who confess their will: many confess their faults, but few confess their will. I am not under God's hand until I confess my will; then instead of giving the flesh an opportunity to act, I refuse it.

We read, of the ten virgins, that five "*went forth*" with oil in their lamps. There was moral advance. God has called us out and given us light not merely for ourselves, but that we may hold the light for others. We should be found at the very front of God's people clearing the road. When we are in the testimony we are holding the ground by the power of God; we are met together in the Lord's name in dependence on the Holy Ghost.

The children of Israel say to Samuel, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord for us." They are not in the testimony yet; they were not holding the land by the power of God. Samuel then took "a sucking lamb and offered it up for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord." That was the sense

of acceptance. If I am not in the sense of acceptance, I am not without fear. They had first poured out water and fasted. That was the line of separation ; there was now no support from the flesh. The next thing is, I am accepted with God. Paul could never have stood his ground if he had not been in the sense of acceptance. He can say : "The Lord stood with me ;" the Lord delivered me. There is nothing more encouraging than this. The Lord says, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Samuel was as true to this invisible power in the day of ruin as Joshua was in the halcyon days.

We have to abide confidently in the fact that the Holy Ghost is here to maintain for Christ according to His mind ; that He is here to bind together in the bond He Himself has made. The remnant reverts to the beginning, what we have to do is simply to hold fast in the midst of the ruin in dependence on the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is here, and Christ's body is here. Are you true to Him outside everything here ? Are you depending only on Him ? Have you no ostensible means of any kind ? What has brought us to the pass we are in, is looking for every kind of support from man. We are to be outside the human thing, we are to be cast on God ; we are to be dependent on a power which is invisible to natural sense, but well known to faith. We are em-

barrassed by numbers who walk by sense, who are looking for something that commends itself to man's judgment, who are not counting on God. Samuel counted on God, and he set up a stone, an Ebenezer, an enduring monument of His succour.

In 2 Timothy we see the terrible character of the thing, and we see also how a person ought to act in such circumstances. In chapter iii. Paul sets forth his *inward* experience; his "manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience." Then his *outward* experience: "persecutions, afflictions," which came upon him. And then, for Timothy's perfection, he adds the Scriptures. He goes on in chapter iv. to say "I charge thee" before God and Jesus Christ; at His appearing He will take into account the way you have been acting for Him during His absence.

"They went forth to meet the Bridegroom." What characterises the Spirit and the bride is that they are ready for His coming; they say to Him, "Come." You cannot call Him to come with an honest heart if you are not right with Him. If you are embarrassed or hindered, if the dust of the wilderness is on you, rub it off; prepare for His coming. We ask Him to come back to a world that rejected Him, but we ask Him to come back to hearts ready to receive Him. It is not that two or three say, Come, but let *all* say, Come; and then let him that is athirst,

he who is not really delivered, not really happy, let him come. We ask the Lord to come, and now we turn round and ask you to come ; and to the utmost bounds of the earth, "Whosoever will, let him come."

A wonderful path is before us. The Lord grant we may be faithful to Him in it, for His name's sake. Amen.

(J. B. S.)

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THE Lord give us to have these poor wretched hearts of ours broken, swept out, and all that is in them replaced by what is in Himself.

I am but a broken vessel, no creature glory whatever ; but, if I am this poor thing, all the sweeter are God and Christ up there for me.

(G. V. W.)

STILL ON SALE.

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EDITED BY J. B. S.

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