

# 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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## THE ENSNARING EFFECTS OF THE VISIBLE.

It is solemn to reflect, in this day, on how the *visible* and the *human* are being used to supplant the *invisible* and the *spiritual*. Every art of the enemy, his profound skill and dexterity, his many-sided and deeply laid plots, are all in requisition at this moment to destroy, if it were possible, and in any case, alas ! to deteriorate and tarnish, every testimony to the reality and power of things not seen.

It is very instructive to note how, even in days when "sight" and "nature" were the ground on which man walked before God, as tested and proved by Him, God had His own independent witnesses to the only path suited to Himself in a world where everything is in revolt, and manifesting the consequences of departure from God. *Faith*, not sight, is that great principle, as we find from Hebrews xi. ; and this line of life and power was maintained by these worthies amid trials and sorrows of no ordinary kind.

The earliest departure from this divine path of faith is recorded in Genesis xii., in the very same scripture which tells us of the call of Abram "*out*" from country, kindred, and father's house.



Set free by "death" (see Acts vii. 2-4), "glory" had its full weight with Abram; and very blessedly did he rise and go forth from every visible thing, as expressed by country, kindred, and father's house, "into a place which he should afterward receive for an inheritance . . . . not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. xi. 8-10.)

As thus brought forth by glory and death, to walk the invisible path of faith, the visible for a time ensnares him. The famine, that was seen, took a firmer hold upon him than the "God of glory," who appeared to him in Mesopotamia, and afterwards when he was in the land of Canaan. Being thus deceived, he sought for help in Egypt, and *found Hagar!* which "answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." (Gal. iv. 25.) Note well in this scripture the contrast between "*Jerusalem which now is,*" and "*Jerusalem which is above.*"

Another instance of the seductive power of the visible, is recorded in Genesis xlviii. Most blessed is it to see faith, the invisible power, triumphing in Jacob over all that marked his previous checkered history, as we behold him rising superior to nature and its claims, when he laid

his hands on the head of Ephraim, the younger of Joseph's two sons, "*guiding his hands wittingly*;" yet equally distinct is the snare of the visible, seen in Joseph's displeasure and dissatisfaction thus expressed: "Not so, my father; for this is the firstborn; put thy right hand upon his head."

There is likewise a very solemn coincidence between this break-down of faith in Joseph, when being invested with the forfeited portion of Reuben (1 Chron. v.), and the actings of the same Reuben afterwards in Israel's history, when, in conjunction with Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh, he erected "*a great altar to see to*." (Joshua xxii. 10.) But of this more further on.

How blessed and encouraging to see in the last moments of the patriarch on which we are dwelling, the fruit of the patient, gracious ways of God with him! How cheering to see a man whom *sight* and *sense* controlled in no ordinary degree, now in faith the witness for God, intelligent, subdued, and elevated: "By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff." And equally comforting is it to hear one who was continually contravening the ways of God by the visible and natural, thus accept death for himself upon it all: "Behold, I die; *but God shall be with you.*"

Another striking instance of the perverting power of the visible is presented in Moses, when

called of God to be the deliverer of Israel. Solemn it is to reflect on what little stay his soul derived from the promised "Certainly I will be with thee," of the "I am that I am." (Ex. iii.) Observe how the absence of the visible and the human, "I am not *eloquent*, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am *slow of speech*, and of a *slow tongue*," are his pleadings to be excused; and this in the presence of the most marked display of the *super-human*. (See chap. iv. 2-7.) This was not that faith which characterised him at the first, when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Then the visible was of no account to him; but he has drooped in soul, as it were, since then; and now, as Abraham went into Egypt for help and got Hagar there, so Moses turns to the same quarter and gets Aaron, his trial and affliction afterwards. Very solemn it is to contemplate how this same Aaron, given to Moses in the day when he craved for the outward and the visible, as we have seen, was the very man who ministered to the people in their idolatrous craving after the visible, when they "*saw* that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount" (Ex. xxxii. 1); and the same Aaron of whom it is said, with respect to the molten calf which he himself had made, "and when Aaron *saw* it, he built an altar before it."

In the same manner afterwards, in their history

in the wilderness, did they crave for "a captain" (Num. xiv. 4), in order that they might return into Egypt, where Abraham went in the famine, and where, alas! many a child of God now turns in like circumstances, in order to find some visible countenance or support. Both "calf" and "captain," the one made and the other desired, are but the ensnaring meshes of the visible and the human. We know that "these things were our examples," that is, types (τύποι). (1 Cor. x. 6.) The Lord give us to study it, and take it to heart, as to how far we, as His people to-day, have not dropped down, a thousand-fold more than they, into the perverting line of sight and nature.

It is very solemn to note the *moral* order in which the apostle, in the above scripture, refers to the circumstances in Israel's history, on some of which we have been dwelling. The spring of all was the insufficiency of the unseen, the craving for the visible; then, having obtained the lusted-after object, it becomes their idol; next follows unholy alliance with Moab (fornication); and lastly, the captain is desired, as the calf had been made. This moral, not historical, order is very solemn, as setting forth the course of the professing church of God up to Laodicea, which is the great boaster of the visible (Rev. iii. 17), and which, when full blown, will be spued out, and then carried by Satan's great visible power on the earth. (Rev. xvii. 7.)

But we must turn to Israel's history in the land for a little, to see how this terrible principle ensnared them in all their course. Alas, even when they were *in type* a dead and risen people (across Jordan), and in the land of Canaan, their first failure was from this very principle we are considering. First, observe what a testimony Jehovah gave to His thoughts and ways, in the manner in which Jericho was surrounded and captured. There was the entire absence of any visible display of power, but there was to be that which is the invariable concomitant of real power, namely, noiseless equanimity. (Joshua vi. 10.)

Has not all this its own special voice for His saints of this day, who professedly occupy the ground on which Israel stood typically when in Canaan? Has it not a double voice as well? Does it not distinctly tell us what the mind and thoughts of the Lord are, as to the real power of that which is *invisible* and *supernatural*? But does it not also very clearly indicate our true place as across Jordan, namely, *that we are dead men*, and helpless in every human point of view? The Lord give us to ponder the weighty instruction which is here conveyed to faith.

Now the very next chapter is the record of how the visible ensnares, for we read of Achan making confession of his sin in these words: "When I SAW among the spoils a goodly Baby-

lonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and *took* them." (Joshua vii. 21.) How solemn the rise, progress, and issue of the bewitching effects of the visible!

We will turn now to another striking exemplification of our subject: it is supplied to us in the history of Reuben's great altar, "TO SEE TO." (Joshua xxii. 10.) This act of the two and a half tribes was in perfect moral accord with the position they had taken. That position is thus sorrowfully expressed, "*Bring us not over Jordan.*" (Num. xxxii. 5.) They were under the power of the visible, they possessed "a very great multitude of cattle." What could be more *natural* than that they should seek the spot most suitable to their circumstances? And if in that day there were to be found men of such narrow and extreme thoughts as to press the fact that the other side of Jordan was the true possession of God's Israel, and that taking it this side, or looking for it this side, is abandoning the call and purpose of God, how would not Reuben and his associates resent all such visionary and transcendental notions as these? And is it not Satan's great object in this day as in that day, to hinder the people of God, and keep them out of their true and rich blessing, by despising and scorning the unseen land beyond the river, and presenting some visible Jazer and Gilead instead? May the

Lord give to His saints in this time of sifting, the wing of faith to rise beyond the snares and nets abounding in the land of sight!

But mark the beginnings of this great altar. We read: "When THEY SAW the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that behold, the place was a place for cattle." It was the same principle exactly that operated in Lot, who "lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." (Gen. xiii. 10.) The sight principle confounds the garden of the Lord and the land of Egypt. Just think of these two put together: "Egypt," and "the garden of the Lord!" What a contrast! The one is *above* and *unseen*; the other is *below* and *visible*. Jordan separates them. And alas! there are not a few to-day who have lifted up their eyes like Lot, and like Reuben, and *seen* well-watered plains, and places for cattle, and are settling down, or are settled down, on *this side of Jordan*. It is thus evident that there can be no security whatever from the ensnaring effects of the things seen, save as the soul is consciously kept in the light of what is unseen; and that cannot be, if *the other side of Jordan* is abandoned, as the only sphere for faith to rest in.

Thus to return to this history of the two and a

half tribes, we find that their "*great altar to see to*" was in perfect keeping with their choice of what they had seen *this side Jordan*: it was a craving after the visible. It was a subtle wile too. They did not mean or intend to abandon the worship of the God of Israel; but, having made a false choice in settling down in Jazer and Gilead, their human expedient is the erection of a great altar to see to, something *visibly* great, somewhat that appealed to the eye; an attempt in reality to bring God to man's ground, instead of man to God's. How solemn! It is not necessary to pursue the history further, or to point out how the other tribes resented this act of Reuben. My one object in dwelling on it so far, has been to point out the principle involved, and how deceiving and ensnaring the visible is.

It is very instructive also to observe how, in the close of Joshua (chap. xxiii.), the people are warned in the most solemn way against the inevitable consequences of being ensnared by *visible worship* (ver. 7), and *association in a natural way* (that is, yielding to *what is seen*) with the people of the world (ver. 12); and this is precisely what came to pass. How solemn! They were in the *true standing*, yet incompetent to maintain it. Then, in chapter xxiv., it is the same line of most solemn prophetic exhortations. They had been worshippers of the visible (idolaters), and the snare would be to return to it.



All being finished, Joshua "took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; *for it hath heard* all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us."

I shall now turn to one more instance of the power of the visible and its consequences upon Israel, and that is, the way in which it acted upon them so as to hinder the observance of the Sabbatical year. In this instance it is all the more remarkable and solemn how the visible turned them aside, inasmuch as there was a special provision made by Jehovah to meet the case. (See Lev. xxv. 20, 21.) The desire of His heart was that the land should keep a sabbath unto the Lord: "The seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord." Nothing could be more distinct, or beautiful in its import and typical bearings. Did Israel observe and cleave to the mind of Jehovah as to this? Observe the solemn warning of chapter xxvi. 43: "The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them;" as well as verses 33, 34: "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies'

land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths." Such were the prophetic warnings which follow immediately the ordinance of Jehovah as to the sabbatical year, yet how lost upon the nation, ruled by the visible, as it is clear they were, in refusing to keep it! In vain, as far as they were concerned, did Jehovah promise, "I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth *fruit for three years.*" (Chap. xxv. 21.) The visible work of man's hands, their *sowing* and *reaping*, was greater and better to them than His blessing. Thus they lost their highest favour, and 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 20, 21 records the execution of the predicted sentence in these solemn words: "And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon, where they were servants to him [the king of the Chaldees] and his sons, until the reign of the kingdom of Persia; to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, *until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths*; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years." How solemn all this; yet how blessed to see that when they were in Babylon and all visible means of help gone from them, and entirely in the hands of their oppressors, then those, who were really faithful to the Lord, found out where alone their real resources were—even in God Himself.

May His saints to-day have grace to ponder

and weigh in His presence, the weighty lessons which this history affords, that, amid the increasing tendency to turn away from the line of life and faith, grace may either preserve or recover a true remnant for the Lord, broken-hearted ones who, amid sorrow and pressure, cleave to Himself, whom, having *not seen*, they still love.

W. T. T.

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UNDER the law you could not look even at the reflection of the glory, because it came as a legal claim on man. You never get the light of God shining into a man's heart without the conscience being awakened; under the law the glory became a ministry of death and condemnation; *now*, when I see the glory, I see it in the face of Him who was hanging on the cross for my sins. And what does it mean? It means that the whole question has been settled entirely and exclusively between God and Christ upon the cross, and man had no part whatever in it except the sins which He bore; and this is both our shame and our comfort.

The power of God is this complete redemption clearing away my sins and everything that was against me. Christ met the whole case, and He is in the glory in virtue of the work He has accomplished, and the testimony to me is, the Man who has borne my sins is in the glory; a Man against whom Satan did his worst is in the glory. All that, I get by seeing that glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

(J. N. D.)

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What is your centre? Is it the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven? How are you and I walking? Is our first object in everything *that* Lord Jesus? He is thinking of me whose beck all heaven waits on! If you cannot see Christ with you in the furnace, you may be quite sure He *is* there. What if I am in the deep a night and a day, if Christ is with me there! I shall find sweetness *wherever* I am, if *He* is with me.

(G. V. W.)

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## "I AM WITH YOU."

HAGGAI II. 1-9.

It is a blessed thing for us that, in the word of God, in connection with difficult circumstances, we always find divine principles set forth, which apply not only to the day in which those circumstances occurred, but which also find their application in our own day.

We are left here in a place where difficulties and trials of every kind have come in. It is easy enough to get on when there are no difficulties, but it is impossible for me to witness for Christ in a day when there are, unless I know what my resources are. And we know that we are in a day of difficulty, a day of disheartening, a day very much the same as that of Haggai; so that we may expect to find here principles that will apply to ourselves.

In Ezra we are told what it was that discouraged the people, and how they yielded to the pressure that the enemy brought to bear upon them. They yielded to it, and got occupied with themselves. In a certain sense they gave up the public and corporate testimony, and satisfied themselves with their own individual blessing. But we, for ourselves, must remember that there

is a corporate testimony on earth now, and that our responsibility is to maintain that testimony.

Now the people here had given up the testimony, for there was very little to encourage them to go on with it. There *had* been the glory connected with the house when first it was set up; *now* all *that* was gone. What they lacked, and what we want, is *faith*. When all is gone to the outward eye, then is the moment when faith comes in. There never was a moment when the people of God needed faith more than in the present day, when everything seems going to wreck and ruin around us.

In the second Epistle to Timothy, when Paul's sun is going down, and he is exhorting Timothy to maintain the testimony—at the very time in which he exhorts him to "reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine," he is obliged to add, as far as the look-out was concerned—not, things will grow brighter—no—but—"the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine . . . they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." If it is the look-out that either encourages or discourages you, then there is enough to discourage any servant of God. But in such a moment it was the very time when Timothy was to work the more earnestly.

So in Haggai, the Lord stirs His people up by the prophet, to be not looking at the surrounding

circumstances, which were well calculated to depress them, but to set to the work of the Lord's house, counting on the One on whose power they could rely in it all. And the moment the people are *obedient*, that moment comes the word of the Lord to them, "From this day will I bless you." We get their *activities* afterwards, but the instant they turn to *obey*, the instant their heart is towards Him, comes the response, "*I am with you.*" And they could not have moved a step without that stay. Neither can we move without it. The Lord does not say to us, Go on a little way, and I will see how you get on, and if you do well, I will be with you. No; He comes at the first step in the path of obedience.

And now God brings in two things to cheer them in their path, and, as we consider them, we shall doubtless see the analogy between them and ourselves. The first thing he says to cheer them is, "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" The very thing that had been weighing on their hearts; the plain building—nothing to see—after all the glory of Solomon's. But says the Lord, "I am with you, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not." It is the unchangeableness of God: it is the same power, the same spirit, the same God who brought

them out of the land of Egypt, who is going to be with them in all the wreck and ruin.

Does it not ever cheer your heart amidst the ruin around us to look up into heaven? To see that the One who is seated there at God's right hand is up there *for His people*?

"Yet"—and here is the cheer that comes in—"yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. *The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former*, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." It is "the latter glory of this house;" it is the same house all through, not another. The comfort and cheer for their hearts is this: that, discouraging though the outlook was, yet the latter glory of this house which seemed to them so poor, should be greater than the former in the days of its magnificence.

And what is the cheer for our hearts in the present day? It is, amidst all that is discouraging around us, the fact that "Christ has loved the church and given himself for it," and that He will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Is this going to be true? What a cheer for our



hearts to know that the day is coming when this church, now so ruined and scattered, shall be brighter and more glorious than it ever was, even in the bright day of which we read in Acts ii. Our poor hearts are apt to get under the burden; we are apt to cry to the Lord to come and deliver us from all the sorrow, all the ruin, that surrounds us. But God has other thoughts for us. He would have us in the path of *obedience* before He comes. He says, I will give you the promise to cheer you till I come; and now what I want you to do is to *build*, and not to despair. Surely there is enough to make us weep, to make us hang down our heads in the present day; and natural judgment would lead to the casting aside of this one and that one as hinderers to the testimony. But, whilst I seek to be faithful and true in my own responsibility to the Lord, I recognise the fact that, though the enemy has come in and spoiled the flock, tearing one here and another there, so that the corporate beauty of the whole is spoiled, yet the sheep are His. We cannot say, Let us gather together all the sheep that have not got their wool torn, their feet wounded; that would be eclectic, sectarian. We have to do with the sheep, *every one of them*, in the state in which we find them. If our love is co-extensive with His, it will reach out to every one of them. If in a day of difficulty we are found not in communion with God, not walk-

ing with Him, not taking His lead, we shall but scatter the sheep, and do more harm than good; but if we walk with Him, we shall have His light and His guidance through it all. The great thing is to have the mind of God about His own.

I need hardly say that this consideration for the sheep will never lead to indifference as to our associations. Our responsibility to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour abides, and we may have the grief of withdrawing ourselves from those who walk disorderly; but, if we are with God in these things, grace will be exercised up to its *divine* limits, instead of being arrested by mere human considerations.

Thus can we cheer and support our hearts. The coming of the Lord draws nigh, when every saint of Christ shall be *like Christ*. Are there those on earth about whom we may be weeping? What a blessed comfort that the day is coming when they will be like Christ! This is our cheer as to the future.

And then as to the present, "*I am with you.*" Directly I am obedient I have God with me. It is not directly I am doing His work; I may do His work in my own way; but it is *obedience* that He seeks. What a cheer for our hearts to be able to have the confidence that God is with us! Then we get that blessed comfort spoken of in Colossians, "the peace of *Christ*," about His

saints. Wonderful grace that God should invite us to make our requests to Him, so that, casting all our care upon Him, nothing may be able to ruffle us. What about the saints of God? What about the church? If I am called to look forward to that day when all will be bright, when all will be perfect, so now I am called to have the peace of Christ about it all.

The Lord give us to know something of what the cheer, what the comfort is that God gives. We are called to have patience under all circumstances until we emerge in all the brightness, all the joy, of the moment when we shall be fully in accordance with all His mind for us.

(J. G. H.)

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One may present the truth, but if God do not change the will it produces anger. Man's mind is always atheist when it is sifted out, so when the mind works for itself it is necessarily atheistical; for my mind cannot go beyond my mind, else it is not my mind; but, if God cannot go beyond my mind, He is not God.

(J. N. D.)

## “CHILDREN WALKING IN TRUTH.”

1 JOHN II. AND III. 1-3.

IN the Epistle to the Romans believers are looked at as *adopted* sons: they are found away from God in their sins; and there it is God, in His grace, sets them free through the death of His Son, and then gives them His Spirit, whereby they cry Abba Father.

In this Epistle we are not looked at as adopted. It is something nearer than that: we are *born* of God. And while the adopted side is one that we ought to know and enter into, that we may realise our responsibility before God for every wrong thing we have done and thought, and our need of knowing that the end of all such things is judgment; yet here we get something more intimate; for I do not believe there ever can be the same blessedness in the mind of an adopted child, that there is in one that is a born child. And so, having learned in Romans what our adopted side is, and how well founded, how sweet to learn now the born side and the resulting intimacy.

So the apostle begins: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked

upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)." Now I say, *that* is the life. This is what the Holy Ghost is going to occupy you about, "that your joy may be full." That is the life that is in you, and henceforth characterises you. The life which links you with God, and which puts you in the same relationship with Him as Christ Himself.

And, mind you, there is something exceedingly sweet about this. It is a *Man* whom "we have heard, whom we have seen, whom we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." It is a *Man*, a Man who is up there at the right hand of God, that is my life. And with Him and in Him I am linked to God for time and for all eternity, being, by His blood, cleansed from the sin which before hindered such a tie.

"My children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." There is no "little" in this verse. It is simply the fact that *children, born ones*, are addressed. And these are not to sin. It is the knowledge of Christ that keeps us from sin. If we get acquainted with Christ, if there is real *heart* acquaintance with Him, it is then we learn to loathe sin in every form. Those who do not know Christ will tell us, that a man must be under the law to keep him from falling into sin;

that this is the only way to check it. Their words shew that they know nothing of the power of Christ's company. Being in company with Him will keep me holy. His disciples had to drop some way behind Him when they wanted to quarrel about who should be the greatest. If they had been near enough to Him to be conscious that their quarrel reached His ear, do you think they would have done it? So it is when we get away from Christ that we act in a manner unworthy of Him. Close to Him it is impossible. Close to Him we see on His uplifted hand the marks of the deepest step in His humiliation—that step caused by our sin; and we shall see it to all eternity; it will be “in the midst of the throne, a Lamb as it had been slain.” We cannot sin near Him.

But suppose I get away from Him and I do sin? Is there no remedy? Yes, thank God. If there were no remedy where should we all be? “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous*.” The One who is there at the right hand of God to maintain what is just and true, to maintain the righteous character of God, He is the One who is there for me if I sin. It is “Jesus Christ the righteous,” the upholder of the character of God. And thus He enables God to go on with us even if we sin.

“And he is the propitiation for our sins.” How blessed this is every day! As I grow in experi-

ence of what I am ; when I am conscious that I have sinned ; when I own my sin, and my soul is restored, I appreciate the more the blessed fact, that "He is the propitiation for our sins."

"And not for ours only, but also for the whole world." Fifteen years I have gone about the world telling of the salvation of God, and at the end of these it is sweeter than it was at the beginning. Why? Because as one knows himself better, redemption grows sweeter, and He that has wrought it is loved more deeply. To speak of Him therefore has increased delight. As the roots of the tree go deeper down, the branches spread out the more towards heaven. So also the soul led deeper down into the sense of sin, rises higher up into fellowship with Himself. There must be the first if there is to be the last. The ballast must be increased if there is to be more sail carried. The danger is not in too much sail, but in too much sail for our ballast. That is, the danger is not in having much high and heavenly truth, but in not having in ourselves a corresponding sense of what we are in ourselves. God must have reality. If we profess more than we really have practically with God, we shall suffer for it ; we make a way for Satan to come in ; we open our ranks to the enemy.

Now we all know that in scripture there are two representative men, Cain and Abel. The

first man is proved all through the word to be worthless ; he is a tree that brings forth nothing but leaves, so the gardener ends with cutting it down. God gets rid of the first Adam and brings in Christ. Now how does He do this ? How did we, who are now in Christ, get rid of our old pedigree ? *By the death of Christ.* At the cross of Christ was ended before God the first man. Christ's death has severed me from the first man ; I do not mean in creation, but in *sin*. The relationships which God created are not sinful ; they remain ; but *sin* is ended in the cross of Christ ; everything in nature that is connected with sin is ended there for the believer. And He is coming back now to put an end to sin in every way ; but meanwhile, we, in whom sin still is, are linked with Him the second Man, and have done with the first man altogether as to our standing before God.

To illustrate it. I say, Here is a woman : she *was* one man's wife, but he died, and now she has become another man's wife ; thus she has changed her relationship, the first being ended. Her name is changed, and she now follows him whose wife she has become wherever he goes ; she shares his joys, she shares his cares, she shares his sorrows, she shares his riches, she shares his poverty, she shares no matter what may come *with him*. And so with us. By the cross of Christ the link is broken that bound us



to the first man, we belong to the Second, and now we go *with Him*. We say: "My beloved is mine, and I am his;" "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine;" and "I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me;" the three links between the Bridegroom and the bride which we find in Canticles.

And now are we going to be ashamed of our connection with Him in this scene? He is not going to be ashamed of us before the angels. Many a person in this land would not have one not in their own rank sit at table with them; they would be ashamed before their servants standing round them. And I say the Son of God, with all His angels standing round Him, is not going to be ashamed to have us with Him there! Oh, if He has chosen me to be with Him there, if He is not going to be ashamed to have me with Him in such company as that, I say I *must* go on with Him now; I *cannot* be ashamed of Him!

And I will go on *cheerfully* too, not grudgingly. How many a wife has gone on with her husband through every kind of discomfort and deprivation. She says, I might have comforts, I might have ease and plenty if I turned my back on him; but I would sooner go on with him; I prefer to lack all, if I have only his company. And surely so with us. He has shewn us His love, and our heart is bound up in Him, and we say,

Come what may, we will go with Him. All sorts of things may now press on us, but there is one unfailing remedy: *intimacy with Him*. When you have that, every breeze that blows is only so much to fill your sails, and brighten your hope of the glory.

But suppose we have got away from Him, and are depressed in soul, and cannot go on, what is still the remedy? Just to go to Him and tell Him all, and we shall find Him a very present help. Truly the lines are fallen unto us in pleasant places. He is always there for us; He is our remedy at all times; if the winds are blowing high, still there He is for us, and coming to meet us among the waves.

And this is the way we grow in age; it is through intimacy with Christ. This is the way we grow from “little children” to “fathers.” We all like to grow into fathers, even in natural things.

Again the apostle addresses all believers as “children:” “I write unto you, children,” not to *ask* if your sins are forgiven, but “*because* your sins are forgiven for his name’s sake.” And then he passes on to address the fathers, young men and little children separately. Little babes are all *children*; they are all begotten ones. He can say of all three classes collectively “Children, your sins are forgiven you;” and then he writes to each separately.

He begins with the fathers: "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." Experiences come as we get on in the christian life, and they may be of such a nature that the soul, like Peter on the restless wave, is affrighted; but this only turns, through grace, into an occasion for the Lord to put out His hand and make Himself better known. This is what produces "fathers." They learn through these experiences the emptiness of everything but Christ. One younger may go to the word to find *comfort*; the "father" goes there to find *Christ*. "Little children" may think of their glory in heaven and their crowns; "fathers" are satisfied with the thought of having Christ there. Christ *only* is enough.

Just to sit down at His feet, as a child, who has got wearied of all his playthings, comes at last and sits down beside his father, and there he is comfortable and goes to sleep, for he is close to one who has a heart for him, a heart that he can rest on, one who is his friend, and near whom he is satisfied. Oh, beloved friends, all the trials, all the sorrows by the way, are sent just that we may get weary of our toys, weary of our playthings, and be satisfied with *Him*! sent that we may grow up into fathers.

Lower down he says again: "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning." He can only say to

them what he has said before, for there can be nothing higher than Christ.

Then he turns to the young men: “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one.” . . . “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” I would say a word in passing here. I believe many saints are not clear about the difference between the flesh and the devil; I believe many ascribe to the flesh what belongs to the devil, and to the devil what belongs to the flesh. Now the flesh is an evil principle within us, while the devil is an intelligent person without. The flesh goes after that which satisfies the passions, ministers to the senses, and gratifies self in its varied propensities. Satan has an object entirely beyond anything of this sort: Satan has no object short of the throne of God. Satan loves to busy himself with scripture, but his application of it is always wrong. You can always detect Satan when scripture is used to establish a wrong principle. There is nothing he has on his tongue’s end better than scripture, but he uses it to tear down, not to build. Satan may make use of the flesh in a child of God to make him dishonour Christ, for there is no person he hates like Christ. Flesh has nothing higher than self. Satan’s ambition has nothing short of the throne of Christ for its aim.

How can I practically silence flesh—that evil principle in me which is ever asking self: What would you like me to do to gratify you? I answer, by receiving the blessed fact that I, myself, have been put to death in the death of Christ. Thus flesh has nothing to work on. Its field of operation is gone if I accept my death in Christ's. But with Satan it is quite a different thing. His sphere of operation is where Christ is, and where Christ is at work. We silence him by using the word of God against him, using it aright against his false use of it. We "flee youthful lusts," but we resist the devil and *he* flees from us.

Now the fathers are, so to speak, done with Satan; they "know him that is from the beginning." Satan knows Him too, and knows well it is useless throwing darts at men who are clad with such an armour. They have also proved that in them, that is in their flesh, dwells no good thing; moreover they have proved the emptiness of the world and the things which are in the world.

The "young men" have not learned all this, but they are learning it. The word of God abides in them, and that is their strength to meet Satan. They are *in* the battle.

But there is a great danger for them here: the world and the things that are in the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world," is the admonition for them. In

the battle with Satan, where his attacks against the soul and the things of Christ are of paramount importance, the danger from that quarter is apt to be overlooked. The necessities of life come; the family and its cares; property, business, and so on. Beware! Beware! “The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked,” and while you really are beginning to get rooted in this poor, wretched scene where your Master had not a pillow, your heart will not fail to find an excuse.

And now to the little children, who know the Father, the apostle adds: “It is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.” But you answer, perhaps, this time has been going on for eighteen hundred years, so it could not have been the last time when John wrote. I reply that before Christ came it was not the last time. A great event had to take place—that which was promised after the fall; a great promise had to be fulfilled—that which foretold that the woman’s seed should bruise the serpent’s head. The great turning-point in the world’s history had not come. But now it *has* come. And what remains? Nothing, but that “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” When? At *any* time! Then, I say, it is “the *last* time!” Wonderful grace that He has waited

so long! Thank God that He has waited till to-day! If He had come ten years ago, how many of you would have been lost? His waiting, what is it caused by? By infinite grace, by infinite love. He says, I cannot shut the door; I am keeping it open still. Beloved, it has been "the last time" ever since Christ went back to heaven, and He is still loth "to rise up and shut to the door."

And then the apostle warns the little children too. Their danger is Antichrist—that which looks like Christ and is not. There are many things that look like Christ and yet they are only antichrists. Doctrines of all kinds which have such a lovely aspect, and are introduced by such lovely people, that the "little children," unacquainted as yet with the word of God, and the malice of Satan, and the cunning of man, easily fall into.

But if you are a little child, and are simply subject to God, He will teach you Himself. You have the Holy Ghost as much as the fathers have, and He is your teacher. "The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." It is not that you are not to be ministered to by others, for God gives teachers to His church; but it is that you are not to be in bondage to *man* in the things of God. You have the Holy Ghost, the unction from Him, therefore you may trust Him to lead you in His truth. Only walk near Him.

Now I tell you, that if any young child of God falls into bad doctrine, it is a proof, no matter how young he be, that *he has not been walking with God*; for the anointing that is in him, if he were walking with God, is enough to keep him from all evil. And however young he may be, if he has fallen into evil he ought to be humbled before God about it. How responsible it makes us for everything that we hear, when we are told that we “have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.” This means that we have the ability to judge all things; we are able to discern between what is true and what is not true.

Well, beloved, here we all are: fathers, young men, and little children, all going on together in the same path. May God give us grace to walk in the power of the tie that binds us all together, putting tender care in the fathers’ hearts, watchfulness in the young men’s against the world, and in the little children’s against Antichrist.

(P. J. L.)

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The tide of apostasy has set in, and we have to lift our heads and be faithful for Christ, and be nothing till He makes us everything, but as nothing then as ever; perhaps I should say more so, but possessing Him.

(J. N. D.)



## THE PRESENT PLACE AND GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN.

PSALM VIII. 4-6.

I READ these verses from the Psalm itself, though we shall look at several passages of Scripture in connection with them this evening, please God; but it is really these words that I have it on my heart to speak of a little.

There are three remarkable passages in the New Testament in which they are alluded to: 1 Corinthians xv.; Ephesians i.; and Hebrews ii. But we shall find, in looking at them, that these passages bring out three distinct points in the one great truth that is presented to us.

I suppose I need hardly state what that truth is. We all know that the "Man" alluded to here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us mark well those words: "MAN," and "the SON *of man*." Of Him it is said: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

Before looking into these Scriptures in detail, it would be well to say a word as to their general connection with each other, and as to that which distinguishes each from the other.

Hebrews occupies us with the *person* of the Son of man in the place of glory at God's right hand—the place in which God has set Him. It is the fact of this glorious Person being in this place that is presented to us ; and a quantity of truths are unfolded as spiritual deductions from this great fact, revealing the blessings that flow from thence to those whom He is “not ashamed to call brethren.”

In Corinthians also we find what results to us from the place of glory in which Christ now is ; but here, the Spirit more especially insists on the particular truth that we shall be AS HE IS: “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” This side of the truth is not developed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. That we shall be with Him there is, but *how* we shall be is not.

In Corinthians, the glory of Christ is connected with the hope that is formed in the hearts of those who are waiting down here for Him—the hope of His coming. It runs through the whole epistle. In the very first chapter, when the apostle is considering what characterised the saints, he speaks of them as “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Some might complain of the apostle stating that there were matters about which he ought to give an account ; but he says, Well, I have a good conscience, though this is not what justifies me ; the Lord is

the One who judges me. "Therefore judge nothing before the time, *until the Lord come*, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have *praise of God!*" Beautiful words! They shew what the heart of God is set on! The apostle has no thought of being judged for wrong doing; he knew what Christ had suffered; and though he speaks elsewhere of judging oneself, yet in the consciousness of living for Christ, and walking with a single eye, he could say he knew of nothing against himself; his heart condemned him not; he had confidence towards God. Yet he turns from this blessing to what is brighter still, and looks on with unmingled joy to the day of the Lord's coming; then, embracing others too in the full results of Christ's work as seen in the glory, he says, "Then shall every man have praise of God."

Again, if it is a question of the gathering together of the saints here on earth as members of the one body, with the precious privilege of shewing forth His death, it is "*till he come.*" So too, when speaking of the power of death over the bodies of the saints, and of that fundamental truth of the gospel, the resurrection, the Spirit establishes our hearts in God's "order"—"Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's *at His coming.*" In whatever way the saints are

looked at, whether it is their individual calling and service, their corporate gathering, or the hope of their hearts as to the future, everything connected with them is stamped with this hope: "*till the Lord come.*" To that moment is also reserved the judgment of the one who loves not the Lord Jesus Christ: "Let him be anathema maranatha," maranatha meaning the coming of the Lord; so that it is a curse in and for that day when He shall be manifested. I just mention these things to shew how they are brought out in connection with the Lord's coming in this epistle, whilst in Ephesians, where we also find the Psalm quoted, the Lord's coming is not mentioned at all.

In Ephesians, however, we get the highest point. The MAN in glory is always the same, but here the Spirit shews us the *heart* of the One who is in that place, and what He is occupied with, so that we may have part with Him, and be occupied with the very things with which He is occupied.

The opening statement of the epistle is: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." The Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance, anticipates the moment when we shall be with Christ where He is. We are

blessed *in* Christ Jesus already, in the heavenly places; and that is where our hearts are to be; there is where we find the door open, so to say, into the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the saint's heart may be formed after its divine model.

But let us go back to the first Scripture we noticed in connection with the Psalm, the one in Hebrews, where we find the verses I read are quoted at length. I begin with verse 5, "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." It might be well to remark in passing, that this expression, "world to come," was a term familiar to Jewish ears. There are two or three words used for it in Scripture, but the general thought is the same everywhere. For the Jews there were two worlds, or ages: the age of the law, and the age of the Messiah. The "present age" was the one when the law was in force; the other was "the age to come," that is, of the Messiah—the age to which God looked forward in all the promises that He made to the fathers, and to which all the prophecies converge. Now this "age to come" is not put into subjection to angels, the other one *was*; and in it there was no approaching God: "The way into the holiest was not made manifest." God shrouded Himself in angelic manifestations. Moses and the people of Israel heard His voice at mount Sinai, when the law

was given to them "by the disposition of angels," and the people "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more."

But the age to come is not put under the angels at all. Whom is it put under then? The apostle quotes prophecy in answer: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." *Whose feet?* Messiah's evidently. But there is something more than this in it, beloved friends; it is as MAN. We read: "**What** is *man* that thou art mindful of him? **or** the son of *man* that thou visitest **him**?" God has taken up *man*, and put **all** things under him! This "age to come" is put into subjection to *man* in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him"—it is not yet the day of the manifestation of His glory—"but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." We see Jesus, as Man, the Son of man, in that place "at the right hand of the Majesty on high." And the angels are the servants of those who are made heirs of salvation.

Now, before we go on further, I must turn back to say a few words on chapter i. Before ever the Spirit of God opens out the character and personal glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, as

the exalted *Man*, He takes care to shew us *who* He is. He is the SON OF GOD. And here we are struck by the fact that there are not merely things stated of Him that are true of a divine person ; but that these things are not true of any but of a divine person. For instance, we often find the Psalm quoted which states that God has said to Him, "Sit thou on my right hand ;" but the way in which it is referred to here is quite remarkable ; we read, not that "He is *set* down," but that "He *sat* down." Now what would be said of a person who sat himself down on Queen Victoria's throne ? though she might indeed say to the lowest of her subjects, "Sit down there," and then he would be in duty bound to obey her. The Lord Jesus Christ seating *Himself* on the throne of God shews that He is *God*. He takes the place in His own right, as He had in His own power laid down His life and accomplished redemption : "When he had *by himself* purged our sins," it is said.

Again : "God hath in these last days spoken unto us in [his] Son." It is *God* that has spoken ; but it is God speaking as the *Son*. Time forbids our going through the whole chapter now ; but I just refer to it to shew that, while there is a real *Man* in the glory, that real man is *God*. As in the opening chapters of John's Gospel we read : "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was *God*."

Then, further on, "And the word was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Having premised this, we come to the great fact that is set before us in the second chapter, that the One who has all authority in the age to come is a *Man*, and that Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is most simple, but you will find that this truth is the turning-point of Christianity. The Man in whom God is going to head up everything, that MAN is in His own appointed place *now*; and those who have part with Him, have part with what God has given to Him *now*.

Our hearts are slow to lay hold of this. Naturally we understand better what refers to this earth, and enters into the domain of temporal blessing and deliverances. We are like the disciples who asked the Lord after His resurrection, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" It was quite natural for them, as Jews, more or less instructed in the prophecies, and having their hopes built upon promised earthly blessings, to want to know this. But He answered: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power; but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me." Something better than the restoring of the kingdom to



Israel was to be their present portion. The Lord, who had associated them with Himself in His service on earth, here gives them this blessed title: "*My witnesses.*"\* He was there with them in His body of glory, risen from the dead, on the point of going up to His Father, whence He would send down the Holy Ghost to unite them to Himself in the glory, and be in them the divine power of realising and enjoying the position and relationship of which He was personally the expression—Son of God and Son of man. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." Every redeemed soul now is divinely linked up with the Person of the Son in that place. It is the christian position, and as thus expressed, is seen to be wholly heavenly in its nature, as in its final results.

We find there are four reasons given for the Lord having been so humbled as to become a Man upon earth: for, to go up as such, He must necessarily have come down: as He said to Nicodemus, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that *came down from* heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." As such He was made "a little lower than the angels." Why? First, because "it became him, for whom are all

\* They were to be witnesses of an exalted Christ (see Acts ii. 36), not of a Messiah about to set up His kingdom in glory on this earth.

things, and by whom all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It was what became God. The very first word in the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the key which opens up the whole subject, and enables us to understand it all: "GOD . . . has spoken," has spoken in (His) Son. It is not here a question of what *you* are wanting, or *I* am wanting; it is not what meets the need of our souls here, although surely it does meet it infinitely; but it is what God has done for His own glory; it is what *God* has ever had before Him in connection with His own dear Son. *It became HIM* "in bringing many sons unto glory." It was God's purpose to have a family in glory.

What, then, is that family to be? This is the next question. God is far above all heavens; He looks down upon angels, upon creation, upon all the living beings in this world, and He says: I must have a family in heaven; I want *sons*. He passes by the angels. He looks down lower, and sees man under the power of sin and Satan, living in corruption, going on to hell, and He says, I will take my family from among them. They are all defiled, all in ruin, all living in sin; this is their state. But God promised "eternal life" in Christ Jesus before ever the world was, and the Lord Jesus says, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." He receives the body pre-

pared, so that He may come down to earth, and die to put away sin, and sanctify those whom God gives to Him. He accomplishes the whole work according to the counsels and glory of God. He gives Himself, lays down His life, to sanctify to God these wicked sinners, to make them sons of God, and to bring this adopted family up into the glory that God has prepared for them. It is God's own purpose, and God's own doing. How it sets aside all our thoughts, all our purposes! God is carrying out *His* purpose, *His* thought, and He does it all by His Son! Oh, it is a wonderful revelation He has made to us!

Then we see how He does it: "It became him . . . in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Except these sufferings had been accomplished, He never could have been a Captain of salvation for them. He might have come down into this world as a passing stranger, and gone up again, in His own perfect holiness and divine right, to that place in the glory. He had often done it before. But He never could have taken sons up with Him, unless He had gone through death for them. To be the "captain of their salvation," He must be "perfected through sufferings."

"For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Here we

find the family, the "brethren." And when is this made good? It is *after* the "sufferings." Before His atoning work was done, He was entirely alone, as He said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." After His sufferings unto death, He can say, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." He can accomplish the word of Psalm xxii.: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." He carries out God's own purpose with reference to all those whom He has chosen. The Scriptures quoted from the Old Testament in proof of it are in Psalm xxii.: Psalm xviii.; and Isaiah viii. They develope the blessed position He has brought us into. I do not go into them now at all, for it would take us too long, but pass on to verse 14, where we find the second reason for the Lord Jesus having been so humbled as to become a Man.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood." *What* children? It is these children in God's purpose. He takes His place in grace among them, becoming like them, sin apart. "He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the

devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." He sees them there under Satan's power, under the power of death, subject to it, and He comes down into the place they were in, to deliver them out of it, and bring them up to God. This is the second reason. And then we read: "Verily, he taketh not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold." It is not man universally that constitutes this family; it is of *faith*, that it might be by grace; the "children" are the seed of "faithful Abraham."

The third reason we find in verse 17, "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people." He has come down here, He has humbled Himself thus, that He might take away the sins of His people. If their sins were not taken away, the family that God was going to have in glory would have been unholy; that could not be. On the day of atonement the high priest took the blood of the sacrifice, and sprinkled it in the holy place on and before the mercy-seat, and made atonement for all the congregation of Israel, that they might be "clean from all their sins before the Lord." In like manner the Lord Jesus Christ has "made atonement for the sins of the people," and thus, "having by himself purged

our sins, has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The fourth reason is: "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." That is, He is a faithful High Priest, ministering to His people all along the way, so that there is the fullest provision possible made for their arriving according to God's thoughts in the place that He has provided for them.

And in chapter iii. the Spirit still keeps before us this same blessed point: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful *to him* that appointed him." GOD is the starting-point of all the blessing; *God*, by whom and for whom are all things; *God*, according to whose will all the work is accomplished; *God*, who has put all things under the feet of the Son of man; and *God*, who appointed Him, and to whom He is faithful.

Now let us look for a moment at the *place* to which Christ has gone. He is not said to be "in heaven" merely; that is not enough. People have a careless way of talking of "getting to heaven," as if their highest hopes only attained to creeping in unperceived at the door. The Spirit sets quite another thought before us. We read in the end of the fourth chapter: "Seeing then that we have a great High

Priest, that is passed *through* the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." It is "through," not merely "into." So also in chapter vii.: "made *higher* than the heavens." He has gone up "far above all heavens." There, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He has sat down; that highest place is now filled by a MAN. And that "Man" is there, the divine expression before God of what the family that God is going to have there is to be. There He sits on the right hand of God, and makes known to us His glory.

For every believer here in this world, all sin is gone. The Lord Jesus Christ has gone up in spotless divine righteousness; the question of sin settled for ever; and therefore every one who looks to Him gets the sense that *sin is gone*: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." But not only this; there is for the believer the divine certainty of going to the glory where Christ is. He who is there, is there as our "forerunner," as we read in chapter vi. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." The word "forerunner" supposes there are those who *run after*. The fact is plainly stated that the One who is there, is there as *the "forerunner."* And therefore we have got this hope as the

anchor of the soul ; “ within the veil,” too, the nearest, the most intimate, place in which the presence of God is known, as shewn forth in the tabernacle. In that place Christ is, and He is the anchor of the soul of every believer.

Every captain knows the relief his heart finds on coming into port, when, his voyage over and his care at an end, he drops the anchor, and can go to sleep in peace. No storm can now endanger his vessel, or drive her out to sea ; the anchor is dropped inside the harbour. And where is our anchor dropped ? In the port for which we are bound ; dropped and fixed there before ever we have started on our voyage ! No earthly voyage can illustrate this blessing. Christ, having accomplished all the work, has sat down on the throne of God, and the Christian not only knows he is going there, but he has the certainty of arriving where Christ is. Christ has set him on his way. He, who has passed through the heavens, is sitting as Man at God’s right hand ; He who was *here* as a Man, and who can enter into all our sorrows, all our feelings that are not sinful, all our trials here ; for He *went* through them all, sin apart ; and now is actually *in* the place to which He is bringing us. So the word says, “ *Consider him . . .* who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”



There is just one point left, about which a soul might be anxious, and that is as to how the journey is to be accomplished—how we are to get where Christ is. But we read in chapter ix. : “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.” There are three points brought before us in this Epistle : in chapter ii. we “*see* Jesus ;” in chapter ix. we “*look for* Him ;” and in chapter xii. we “*look to* Jesus.” Now these three things sum up the divine power that God gives us to walk through this world in a way worthy of Him. Then courage and patience are stimulated by the assurance that “Yet a very little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” The epistle is an epistle of *hope* ; the hope of getting to the glory where the Lord Jesus Christ is ; of getting there through the trials and difficulties which we all have to meet with on the way. But if we want to know how long they will last, it is “*yet a little while* ;” and we “have need of patience,” until what time ? “Until the Lord come.” We are going on to glory ; that is the way we are looked at all through this epistle ; we are going on, like the Israelites, to the rest ; and He is going to shorten the journey on *His* side, by coming to meet us. And when He comes

for us, He will not enter into the question of sin at all, for He has done that already: "He appeared once in the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He "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." And what, then, is this salvation? It is certainly not the salvation of souls, for He did the work that has accomplished that before He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But it is God's purpose to have many sons in glory, and having saved them, He is bringing them through this world of difficulties and trials, until He gets them there. And while we are going through, we have to "look off unto Jesus, the beginner and finisher of faith," who is now "set down at the right hand of the throne of God." We look to Him who is in that place, and consequently we have courage to go on until we get to Him.

Now you see, beloved friends, the place that the coming of the Lord has in this epistle, and it must be so. If I have laid hold of the first great truth, that I have a Saviour seated up there at the right hand of God, and that I am identified with Him before God, for "both he that sanc-

\* It is not our purpose now to speak of the future earthly part of the kingdom of the Son of man. There will doubtless be "salvation" for Israel, too, according to the terms of the new covenant. (See chap. viii.)

tifieth and they who are sanctified, are *all of one*," then my soul looks up to God to know what He is going to do next. The Spirit tells us He is coming "the second time without sin unto salvation," that He may crown His finished work in glory.

I turn now to 1 Corinthians xv., though I do not desire to enter into it much ; bnt it is well to have before us the general principles found in it, in connection with our subject.

We begin at verse 20: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Here we find Christ again presented as a Man ; He is spoken of as the "firstfruits." Let us inquire what this expression means.

The children of Israel in the time of harvest brought the firstfruits to the priest, in the presence of God. This act proclaimed a double truth : first that there *was* a harvest, and that it was there ready to be reaped ; and secondly, it gave the priest a specimen of what the harvest was. And so we find it in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The harvest is there, just ready to be reaped in God's thought, "every man in his own order ; Christ the firstfruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at his *coming*." This is the divine order. But the firstfruits has gone up. Is not that beautiful ? When we look at Christ in His own place, up there on the throne of God, we see that a Man in glory is the expression, in

the presence of God, of what every one of His redeemed will be. So that we find in His person up there, not only the divine certainty of our getting there, because He is the "firstfruits," but also the expression of what we shall be when we get there.

Supposing a man in Israel brought, as his offering of firstfruits, wheat or olives, or figs or bunches of grapes, the priest could say to him: You have a beautiful harvest of wheat or olives, or figs or grapes. The firstfruits expressed what the harvest was. And so now, Christ is the firstfruits, He has gone up to God as the divine expression of everything that God is going to take up there in the time of the ingathering: "afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

And how long have we got to wait for it? The very expression "firstfruits" precludes the thought of any time at all. When the Israelite brought them, the harvest was just upon the point of being reaped. And so it is. Christ has gone into that place as the firstfruits, the earnest of the harvest that is *ready*; He has become there the anchor of our souls, and He is coming again to fetch His people home. And therefore what becomes us is surely to be waiting for Him; as it is said in Luke xii.: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their

Lord." The one thing that is needed to put a crown upon the lives of the saints in this world, is that they should be *like unto men who wait for their Lord*.

"For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And then we get this passage quoted again: "For he hath put all things under his feet." I do not enter into all this blessed and beautiful side of the truth; it would carry us away from our subject now. The point is, as in Hebrews, that everything is subjected to Christ. But we find that He will use His power of subjecting all things in changing the body of our humiliation into the likeness of His own glorious body (Phil. iii.), so that when we shall be with Him where He is, we shall be like Him. Then in verse 45 we read: "It is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second Man, the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." *We shall bear it*. It is God's own purpose which must have its accomplishment.

We are waiting for this ; we know that when He comes, He will conform us to His likeness.

Thus we see how inseparably this truth is connected with the coming of the Lord as a formative power in the heart of the believer. You cannot have a sense of the Lord Jesus being in this place in glory, without your heart being formed into waiting for Him to come to take you to be with Him there. The coming of the Lord characterises this Epistle to the Corinthians, as we have already seen.

Just one word more, however, upon the subject before we leave it; I mean as to the *way* in which the Lord's coming is presented to us. You will not find it presented as putting an end to all the troubles and trials of this world. You often hear people say: "Things are very bad, and sorrowful, and trying, but the Lord will soon come and put an end to it all." This is not the way it is put before us in Scripture. I find, on the contrary, that the man who is really waiting for the Lord from heaven will say: I accept all the suffering, all the sorrow, all the trial here as from the Lord ; I do not seek to be "unclothed," I do not wish to escape from it, all I want is to be acceptable to Him in it. If I do not get sorrow here of some kind or other, I am not in the place of a son at all ; for we are told that by the suffering we go through here, God is working out His own purposes for us, and giving

us the immense privilege of finding out in practice what was the path in which the Lord Jesus Christ walked when He was here on earth. I suppose that if there is one thing we shall esteem precious when we see the Lord Jesus in glory, it will be to have been a little while in the world in which He suffered, and through which He walked as the Man of sorrows. But I need scarcely say that, to do this, we must walk with Him.

Wonderful indeed is this subject, too extensive for us to go into now ; but let us remember that the Spirit is not satisfied with our looking for Christ from heaven merely as relief ; it is not to be only a future thing with us ; He would have us, until He has brought us home to the glory where Christ is, occupied with those things which occupy Christ, and in communion with Him in the place in which He has already set us in Himself.

For this we turn lastly to the Ephesians, where we find the Spirit putting before us " the mighty power of God which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come : and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 19-23.)

What a presentation of the church of God! How wonderful the very way in which it is introduced! We have first Christ, the Man in glory brought before us, raised from the dead, and set at God's own right hand by the working of His mighty power;—this glorious "Man" set far above all principality and power, and every name that is named, *all* things being put under His feet. And then, as established Head over everything, He is seen as Head of the church, which is "His body; the fulness of him that filleth all in all"! And now He nourishes and cherishes it, and the day is coming when He will "present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; holy and without blemish . . . . For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

Who can tell it, beloved friends? We have here presented to us the activities of Christ's heart as a world of wondrous occupation for the Lord's people here on earth, so that our hearts may be set upon it, because His heart is set upon it, and so that we may be really walking on in company with Christ in the path into which the Spirit has brought us.



But it is really impossible for us to grasp this side of the truth until we have taken hold of the other two. Unless I know the Lord Jesus Christ as the One who, having purged my sins, has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and is now for me a merciful and faithful High Priest to meet every need on the way up to glory ; unless I am really looking for Him as the One whose glorious image I am to bear, I have no divine capacity for entering into that which is unfolded to us in the Epistle to the Ephesians. For here it is a question of the heart's affections. It is said, even in ordinary things, that " people cannot command their affections ;" and cases are not rare in which we see the affections stronger than the will. But in spiritual things, blessed be God, the Holy Ghost, who leads the saints, sheds abroad in their hearts the *love of God*. All is divine. If I have Christ in my heart, I *must* go on to the glories into which the Holy Ghost would lead me, " where Christ sitteth." I *must* take hold of this glorious hope that is before me, the hope of soon being with Him in the place where He is, the hope of seeing redemption completed in glory. We cannot *see* it now, but the day is coming when every child of God will be like the Lord Jesus Christ ; the day is coming when God will change poor vile man, he who has been the slave of Satan, into the image of His own Son.

And what is Christ doing meanwhile ? He is occupied with His church, with gathering it out of the world, with nourishing it and cherishing it. Where can we find it ? The Lord knows where His members are, and all that is needed for us is to be in the current of His thoughts, that we may find them out, and enter into His thoughts about them. And we need this more than ever now ; for it is a day in which Satan is seeking to take from us all truth connected with it. He will leave us with what people call "*fundamental truth*," but nothing more. Surely every true heart must own as "*fundamental*" what *Christ* is, and what is revealed about Him. It is not *my salvation*, as is generally understood ; it is not anything that is of *me* ; it is what is of GOD, as we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Getting hold of Christ's thoughts as to His church, is the one thing that will keep our souls in order, no matter what comes up. And truth connected with the church is that which Satan is always trying to take away from the saints ; not in a bald way, for they would not stand that, but by so deceiving them as to what *is* truth, that the true thing just escapes their grasp.

We need to lay hold really of the place in which the Holy Spirit has set us, in Christ, who is seated in the heavenlies, and to be occupied with what Christ is there. The Lord will give us the needed courage as we walk

through this world, with all its difficulties, and trials, and sorrows. He assures us that we shall have trouble as we pass through it, but the day is coming which will more than make up for it all. When Christ shall be manifested in His glory, and in His Father's glory, and the glory of the holy angels, we shall be manifested with Him, and meanwhile our blessing and our happiness is to be going on with Him in the scene where He was rejected, and had not where to lay His head, keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

(W. J. L.)

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The character of the world until Satan is bound is just that he is its god and its prince. But, in the midst of the world where he is prince, the power of Christ has come in above it all, and this is the power that is applied to us, and we ought to feel it and possess it.

If my soul be living in this power it will feel the pressure of the evil, but it will not be depressed by it: "not terrified by your adversaries." The practical daily supplies of strength depend upon the heart being with Him who has overcome, who has all power in heaven and earth.

Then we know a sure resting-place in Himself which nothing can touch. The heart with Him who is in rest, and who is above all the evil, has a power which nothing can reach ; and the first mark of this power, when the tide of evil is present, is *patience*—that which endures. And this is better than being able to work a miracle.

(J. N. D.)

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When two parties find themselves in presence of each other, the one who has any superiority ought to take the lead, and be waited upon. But instead of waiting upon God to find out what He has done, we often go before Him, and so find that we come into direct collision with what He has done. When our hearts were first awakened, before we knew Christ, we thought something had to be done, and set to work and laboured three, four, or seven years, and at last we found that all our labour had taken for granted that Christ had *not* died, had *not* suffered upon the cross, and that we were competent to do what only the Son of God could do—settle the question of sin in the presence of a holy God. We had not taken our place as owning God alone, casting everything before Him to see what *He* would do.

(G. V. W.)

## OUR ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS II. 20-23, AND III. 1-4.

WE have here three aspects of our association with our blessed Lord. We are spoken of as "dead with Christ," as "risen with Christ," and as going to "appear with him in glory" by-and-by.

Now these three aspects of our association with Christ bring before us a blessed thing. It is that God in His infinite grace cannot see us apart from Christ. If He died, we died with Him; if He is risen, we are risen with Him; and, as to His future appearing in glory to reign, we are so bound up together with Him, that, when He appears, we shall appear with Him. God cannot *look* at our blessed Lord and Saviour, but He sees us *with* Him.

Now I purpose first simply to consider these three aspects of our association with Him, and then to pass on to the responsibilities which these involve.

In the first place we read, "Wherefore, if ye have *died with Christ*." Now is it too much to say that many of us fail to enter into this aspect of our association with Christ? *Probably* every

one of us here to-night knows forgiveness of sins? Is it too much to ask if we all do? For, as a fact, sometimes one even meets at the Lord's table those who do *not* know the forgiveness of their sins. Assuming, however, with this word of warning, that we *do* know our sins forgiven, let me put a further question: Do we all know what it is to have "died with Christ"?

This is a marvellous thing, and one we do well to consider; for we never can know liberty of soul until we have entered into the fact of our association with Christ in His death. For in that death, not only have I forgiveness of sins, not only is my guilt gone, but *myself* is gone. Knowing union with Him thus, I can take the place of myself being gone altogether; I can say with the apostle: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I live, yet *not I*; self is gone.

Allow me to press this a little before I proceed. Let me say a word as to what we are delivered from by the truth of having died with Christ.

If you turn for a moment to Romans vi., you will find there the first aspect of what we are delivered from. I do not go into the details to-night, but simply call your attention to the

scripture. We read : " Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be"—not " destroyed," but—" brought to nought [*annulled*], that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." It is *sin*, not *sins*, remark. So the first thing we are delivered from by the death of Christ is *sin*.

Many of us, who know ourselves forgiven of God, are often cast down by the knowledge of sin dwelling in us. At first, after our conversion, there was great joy ; but soon after, perhaps, the joy faded away, and inbred sin came up in such a way as even to force doubt upon the soul ; in such a way indeed as to raise the question " Have I ever been saved at all ?" Therefore, I say, if we do not go on beyond the mere knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, we shall never know deliverance from sin.

Now sin has no claim whatever on one who has died with Christ. If a really dead man were lying here before me, I could not by any possibility tempt him to sin. And there is no other way of resisting temptation but by reckoning ourselves to have died with Christ. Otherwise I have no vantage-ground to stand on ; whereas, by this means I become impervious to Satan's assaults. As I have said, how can you tempt a dead man ? Is it not sadly true, that the experience of many of us has been that of successive

defeats ? I believe the reason of this is, that we have never known what it is to have died with Christ, and so Satan is able to entangle us with his wiles.

Beloved, let us enter into what God teaches us here as to our standing in Christ ; that He counts us as having "*died with Christ* ;" that He has in Christ "*condemned sin in the flesh*," so that He has in His death condemned *me* as well as my *sins*.

On passing on to chapter vii., we find we are, secondly, delivered from the *law*. I am going over fundamental truth in touching on these subjects. We find the apostle here dealing with the law. If we read verse 6, it will do for our purpose. I read it from the "New Translation": "But now we are clear from the law, *having died* in that in which we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter." I need not make the familiar statement as to this, that the law has no application as a rule of life for such as are in Christ.

I pass on to the third thing from which we are delivered, which we find in Galatians vi., where we read, "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." The death of Christ delivers us, thirdly, from the *world*. We have first deliverance from



sin ; second, deliverance from the law ; and now we are dead to the world, and consequently delivered from it. It has been said that every trace of Egypt is a reproach to a Christian. If I am crucified to the world, dead to it, by the cross of Christ, by every act in which I associate myself with it, I declare, or rather I deny, in so far as I thus act, that I have died with Christ.

We need to search ourselves with respect to this in the light of that word of God, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If we took the place boldly of having died with Christ, we should be delivered from the world. You cannot pass down a street of any town without being appealed to, on every side, by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. How am I to meet and resist these attractions ? By holding myself a dead man. I have an answer to every temptation that can appeal to me, because God in His grace tells me that I have died with Christ.

Thus, and thus only, are we delivered from sin, from the law, and from the world.

Let me now return to the passage that I read from Colossians. Here we get deliverance from *man*. "Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ

from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." I will paraphrase the last part, as it is really rather different to what is given in our translation; thus: "These things are not of any value; they are only for the satisfying of the flesh."

Now, as we all know, there are before God only two men: Adam and Christ. We are taught in this scripture that we are dissociated from man, from Adam, by being set in Christ. If I do not know this truth, that I am associated with *Christ*, I shall not be able to escape from *man*. I have no right to give allegiance to any man as having authority over me, especially when he presses religious claims as here; I owe allegiance to Christ only. Then why, it will be asked, are wives to obey their husbands, servants their masters, children their parents? *Because the Lord puts them severally in the place of subjection.* I take up every relationship in which the *Lord* puts me, and obey Him in them. Thus I pass through this scene a free man; I am completely delivered from man with all his religious

claims ; I owe obedience only to Christ, and those whom *He* tells me to obey.

Let us take up a few instances in illustration of this truth.

Men come to us saying : We are bound together to do a great and good thing for the world, one which will benefit humanity, will you help us ? I answer, I am glad that you are going to do a great and good thing, but for myself I cannot take part with you in it unless it has the authority of Christ.

In the same way, if a politician seeks to draw me into co-operation with him, let me take the ground of having died with Christ : for then I dismiss politics, for what has a dead man to do with the government of the world ? I dismiss societies and human organisations ; indeed I refuse every claim, whatever its sanctity in the eyes of man, for the reason that, through association with the death of Christ, I have passed out of the sphere in which these things have their place and home.

We now pass on to the second aspect of our association with Christ. We may notice that the twentieth verse is linked with the twelfth, that is the first part of it. And the last part of the twelfth verse is linked with the first verse of chapter iii., where we read : " If ye then be risen with Christ."

Now if we are *risen* with Christ, we have lost

our place in this scene. Colossians is peculiar in this respect. The Epistle to the Romans goes as far as having *died* with Christ, as we have seen. But when we come to the Epistle to the Colossians we have not only *died* with Christ, but we are also *raised* with Him; though we are still left in this scene. Passing on to the Epistle to the Ephesians we go a step further, as you know, and find ourselves seated "*in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*"

But the consequence of our being "risen with Christ" is that we do not belong to this scene at all; we are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Sometimes the question is asked, What are these things? They are all the things that characterise the place where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, the whole scene of glory of which He is the centre; and we belong to that place to which He is gone.

Let me use an illustration of it from the Old Testament. We sometimes say, and it is quite true, that the Psalms are not proper christian experience; yet we come to the Psalms, and can we truthfully say that we are up to some of the expressions which are used in them? Turn with me to the sixty-third. We read: "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." "*No*

*water*," says the Psalmist! Is this our experience—that there is not a single source of refreshment to me down here?

God often makes us learn this lesson. Here is a saint going on very prosperously in the world; everything succeeds with him; he thinks he is finding plenty of water; he *thinks* it, I say, for there is *none*. We have all known such cases. And what does God do? He loves them too well to let things go on thus. He brings wave after wave upon them; trouble and disappointment come in on every side; He lets death roll in upon them, that they may learn practically that there is "no water" in this scene.

But the Psalmist also says: "All my springs are in thee." Not only is there nothing to refresh me here, no water in this scene, but all my refreshment is there, all my springs are in God. I apprehend that a soul who answers to the exhortation in the first part of this chapter, would be able to say this; he would know what it is to have all his springs in God.

Now can we all here to-night take this ground? Do we accept the fact that there is "no water" here? We every one of us *know* it theoretically; we know that all here is vanity, but yet the world, or *something* in it, has got such power over our hearts, that we *have* something apart from God as a source of satisfaction and refreshment.

No one is so independent of everything here as a Christian, from the simple fact that he is dependent on *God*, and therefore he wants nothing else. Suppose that to-morrow some of us were to be shipwrecked on a desert island, just provided with food, shelter and raiment, but unable to speak to any one, could we in such circumstances say, "All my springs are in thee"? As some one long ago said: "We often want something *and* Christ."

We are called to know that this is not our place, but that there where Christ sitteth is our place. If some one, a stranger in the land, came complaining to us of the ways, the arrangements, the laws of the country, surely we should answer him: But you do not belong to it, so it cannot be of much importance to you. In like manner is the Christian delivered from things here, from all that is round about him; he is a stranger amidst it all, waiting for His Lord to return to take him to be with Himself, so that where He is there he may be also.

The second verse needs a word of explanation. It is "set your *mind* on things above," not your "affection" as we have it. One sometimes hears people pray, and certainly one should never judge the prayers of others hardly, for, as the priest separated between the precious and the vile, so the blessed Lord, our great High Priest, separates that in our prayers which is unworthy of Him,

from that He can accept, and offer to God. Still the prayer is sometimes offered that our *affections* may be set on things above; but this is not possible. It is "where your *treasure* is there will your *heart* be also." A husband does not pray that he may love his wife when he *does* love her. So what we desire is, that the grace and beauty and excellency of Christ may have their power over our souls, that our hearts may be drawn out towards Him in the place where He is.

Therefore it is: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth, *for ye have died*"—the most absolute statement in the word of God as to this. As to how God sees you, you have died, and you are to have your mind set on the things which are in the place where He, with whom you are risen, is sitting. "Ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

This links itself especially with the passage in the First Epistle of John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Our life is hidden with Christ in God, but the time is coming when it will be displayed. We do not belong to the scene where we are, and because we belong to that scene where He is, our thoughts are to be occupied with it.

A word more may, perhaps, be said on this third aspect of our association with Christ, before proceeding to consider the responsibility that is involved by these truths.

I therefore add, that this association with Christ as risen, puts us into a waiting attitude. We are not yet in the place to which He has gone; the consequence is we are waiting for the time when we shall be; we are waiting for the time when He shall come and we shall be displayed with Him in His glory. It is the passage we are considering which cleared away the difficulty of years from my mind. It taught me that I *must be* with Him before I could *appear* with Him; and hence that the proper attitude for the Christian should be that of constantly *waiting for Christ* to come and take him to be with Himself.

But may I just say a word or two upon this point? You will allow me, I am sure, to ask, May we not be quite clear as to the truth of the coming of Christ, and yet not be *waiting* for Him? How many of us have asked ourselves the question to-day, "Will the Lord return to-day?" Waiting, you see, implies constancy and expectation. Leave out the coming of Christ and you rob Christianity of its completeness. If I lack this, I must lapse into one of two things: either worldliness or Judaism. We know that there are numbers of God's people who *do not*



see it, and who *will* not see it; and the result is always one of these two. There is no power for going through present things like that of waiting for Christ.

Suppose I leave a servant in charge on going away from home for a time, and say I may come back any day; I cannot fix the time. If there is faithfulness to me in that servant, shall I, on returning any day, find him or her taking their own pleasure? No; they will say to themselves, I must be occupying for my master till the moment of his return. In like manner how often will a loving wife, whose husband is, perhaps, gone to the colonies, ask herself during his absence, as she makes one arrangement or another in the house, Will he like this, or that?

So with the people of God. In the measure in which I expect Christ, I seek to have everything suitable to Him, and the more suitable is all about me to Him, the more intense will be my expectancy of His coming, and my desire to see Him. The blessed Lord Himself will not rest until He has come back to take His people to Himself; and God will not rest until He has displayed us in the same glory with our blessed Lord and Saviour: "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

I now pass on to the responsibility involved by

our being thus associated with Christ in death, in resurrection, and in the glory to come.

To do this I call your attention to two verses which indicate the whole of our responsibility. We read at the ninth verse of the chapter we are considering: "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." I have put off the old man; I have put on the new. When did I put off the old man? In the death of Christ. When did I put on the new? In His resurrection.

And now let me try to indicate the *character* of this responsibility. Since we have thus put off the old man, our responsibility is never to allow it to express itself.

Now there are only three ways in which the flesh ever seeks to express itself. If we turn to Genesis vi. 11, we shall there find two of them: "The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." Corruption and violence. The third, which we do not get in Genesis, because the truth as to Satan was not fully brought out until our blessed Lord came to earth, is lying. The Lord says to the Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a

lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

So that the three ways in which the flesh expresses itself are: corruption, violence, and lying. In verse 3 of this third of Colossians we get corruption; in verse 8, violence; and in verse 9, lying. Unless these three forms of the expression of the flesh are seen, it seems strange why lying should be brought in here.

Of course every saint allows the necessity of not permitting the flesh to manifest itself. But yet, whilst we thus condemn the works of the flesh, is not such a thing as covetousness, for instance, sometimes named among saints? Or anger, for example? Are there none of us who, at times, say with Jonah, "I do well to be angry"? Whereas, we see here that anger is one of the works of the flesh. We must be clear of all these things, We must ask ourselves all through the list of them, Do I allow myself to be angry, to indulge in wrath, to give way to malice, to let blasphemy and filthy communication come out of my mouth? I cannot allow my will to come into activity, but that moment I sin.

You will find very few take the place of having no will; but *the Christian is one who has no will of his own*. Oh but, perhaps you say, none of us come up to that! Still, I answer, it is God's standard for the Christian, and unless we

*accept* the full standard, we shall at once surely fall short of it.

But to pass on to the positive side of it. "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." *Christ is all.* That is, Christ is the image of God, and He is the full expression of the responsibility of every one who has put on the new man. The Spirit of God establishes Christ as to the standard of my walk.

And we are called to this as "elect, holy, and beloved," three terms that are applied to Christ Himself, so that the little verse we sometimes sing is true:

"So dear, so very dear to God,  
More dear I cannot be;  
The love wherewith He loves the Son,  
Such is His love to me."

Thus we are told to put on "bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." It is to be practical "brotherly kindness"—"forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also ye."

If we see failure in another, we often go to exhort and rebuke him about it, and afterwards tell him how much we love him. But the apostle

begins here with the love first. It is the way in which God deals with us. He always shews us His love. It reminds me of one well known to many in this room, when, not long before his death, a relative saying to him, "You are safe under the shadow of His wings," he answered: "Under the shadow of His wings? I am in the very centre of the heart of the Father!" The wings were not nearly close enough to satisfy his appreciation of the Father's love.

Now every one of these characteristics in a Christian is an expression of the life of Christ. For instance, who had such bowels of compassion, such kindness, as Christ? See the story of the widow of Nain in Luke. He meets at the gate of the city a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she, a widow. It is a perfect picture of desolation. And what do we read? "When the Lord saw her, he had *compassion* on her, and said unto her, Weep not." We ought to have the same compassion for each other in like circumstances.

Is it humbleness of mind? meekness too, for humility and meekness are always combined. He says: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am *meek and lowly* in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." You remember the passage.

Then as to "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a complaint

against another." Here I make an alteration which we have in the margin. Surely I hope none of us have a *quarrel* with another; but if we have a little *complaint* against any, what do we do? Go and tell *another*? rather than forgiving *even as Christ* forgave us. *All* these things that are set before us, may be traced in the life on earth of our blessed Lord and Saviour, and they ought also to characterise us.

Verses 15 and 16 are what we may term subsidiary.

Beloved, is not the time come when we must point to these practical little things as those which are needed to be brought out in the lives of the people of God? We have had so much truth. The question is, Have we lived it out? What is the *use* of truth if we are not living it out? Surely we would hold the truth more tenaciously than ever, but the *living it out* is the point. The apostle James says: "I will shew thee my faith by my *works*."

God has truly given us much truth in these days, but the more truth we have, the more humble should it make us, for it is simply the sovereignty of grace that has given it to us rather than to others; and the blessed Lord lays down the principle, that, where He gives much, He expects more. If I have only the truth upon my lips, and my life does not answer to it, the very truth that I proclaim will be my condemna-

tion. Let us never forget to accept the full responsibility of every exhortation in the word of God.

We have next, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which ye are also called in one body: and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." It is all *Christ* in this chapter. I can only just allude to it now. His peace is to rule our hearts! He Himself said: "My peace I give unto you." How easily we are able to meet every difficulty if we have the peace of Christ in our hearts! Go down to your shores when the storm is blowing, when the winds are raging; see the billows dashing and breaking on the surface. But go deep down below that troubled surface, and all is perfectly calm. So with the Christian whilst he passes through the storms here. "The peace of Christ," that peace which He enjoyed as a man down here, that peace is to dwell in your hearts, and keep them in perfect calm whatever the tempests around.

And His word is to "dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The word must *dwell* in me, before it can come out in teaching others. I may perhaps allude to one scripture in connection with it. If we turn to Proverbs xxii., we read in verse 17: "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them

within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." You see the words must be "kept *within*" first of all; it is afterwards that they will be "fitted in the lips." I must first have made the word my own, so that it may come out from within; it is then that it flows out in teaching and admonishing others.

"In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." I must pass on to the last verse, which is a very important word, for it supplies a test for everything.

Young believers, especially, when their hearts are getting away from God, will ask such questions as: What harm is there in going to such a place? cannot I go to a concert? to a flower show? I answer, Yes; if you can do it in the name of the Lord Jesus. This test applies to every department of life. Christ is now to be everything in my life. I am called to express Christ in my life, and He is to be the motive of all my actions, the spring of all I do. Lip and life are the only two channels by which we can express anything, and Christ is to come out in my words and my ways.

All this is very simple, but I trust the Spirit of God may lay it with freshness on our hearts. The first thing is to know our place as having



died with Christ, as having risen with Him, and as being about to appear in glory with Him; and then we must not shirk the responsibility that attaches to all this. Thus, as we walk with Him down here, all the sorrows and difficulties of the way will be but occasions of thanksgiving and praise to God.

(E. D.)

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As metal is smelted in the furnace, so, when God gives faith, He will surely try it, to the end that, "the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

(G. V. W.)

## THE CHURCH AS A HOUSE OR TEMPLE FOR GOD.

IN order rightly to appreciate our corporate privileges and responsibilities, it is necessary to have clear thoughts as to our corporate relationships.

Much has been profitably said as to the distinction between the house and the body, as two aspects in which the church is viewed in Scripture. I do not intend in this paper to say anything more on this part of the subject. But there still exists confusion in the minds of many, in respect to what the word of God teaches concerning the church, as a building, house, or temple, for God, from not seeing that there are *two* distinct aspects in which the church is spoken of in these characters. For this reason I shall endeavour to set forth what I believe to be essential for the clear apprehension of the truth in this matter. My object will be to shew, first, what the word of God teaches concerning the church as a building connected solely with the *work of Christ* as the Builder, as that which *He* is building, and which is *growing up* to be a holy temple *when*

*complete*. Secondly, what is taught concerning the church as God's building, but connected with *man's work* and responsibility; that which is the *present habitation* of God by the Spirit.

Scripture uses the word church or assembly, first, to designate a company which *is being* called out from Jews and Gentiles, beginning at Pentecost, still going on, and only complete at the coming of the Lord for His saints. This company is never supposed to be a complete thing, at any given time, previous to the Lord's return, when it will be composed of all true believers in the Lord during this present dispensation.

Then, secondly, it is used to designate a company already called out, and considered to be a complete company at any given time, from its first inauguration at Pentecost until the Lord comes again. In this sense the church is always spoken of as a formed and complete company in present existence. What has been said applies to the church viewed either as the body of Christ or as the house of God.

Thus Ephesians i. 23, and iv. 16, speak of the body of Christ in the first sense; that is, as composed of all saints called during the present period, from Pentecost to the Lord's return. But Ephesians iv. 4, 1 Corinthians xii., and Romans xii., speak of the body of Christ as that which already exists, always a complete thing, from the

time when it was first formed until the Lord comes again, composed of all true believers who are sealed by the Holy Spirit, and living on the earth at any given time.

The same thing applies to the church when viewed in its other aspect as the house of God. And, to avoid confusion, when thinking of the church, it is necessary not only to distinguish between the body of Christ and the house of God, but also between the two aspects in which the word speaks of the church as a building. In the one case the church is looked at as in the process of being built, growing up, but not complete till the last saint is gathered in. In the other case, it is looked at as being already built at any given time (during the present period) a complete, present habitation of God by the Spirit. See these two things in Ephesians ii. 20-22.

In the former sense the building is considered in connection with *Christ* as the *Builder* (Matt. xvi. 18), as the fruit of His work, and therefore it is composed only of good material, living stones, it is fitly framed together, there is no flaw in it; and it is proof against all the power of the enemy, *it can never be spoiled or overthrown*; and it is a perfect thing when complete at the end. (1 Pet. ii. 5; Eph. ii. 20, 21.)

In the church thus viewed there never can be confusion or ruin; all is produced and sustained by the unfailing wisdom and power of the Builder,

who, when He has completed the work, will present it to God as a holy temple for Him, in which He will eternally dwell, and in which, in the eternal state, He will come down to tabernacle with men, as we see in Revelation xxi. 3, where, having spoken (ver. 2) of the church as the holy city coming down out of heaven, there follows at once the word, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men." The church thus viewed is never in Scripture said to be the house of God *now*, never viewed as the *present* habitation of the Spirit; on the contrary, it is not yet a complete temple, but still being built or growing up to be such.

In Matthew xvi. 18, the Lord speaks of it prospectively, declaring that He was about to build it, which also He began to do on the day of Pentecost. In Ephesians ii. 20, 21, it is spoken of as growing *unto* a holy temple; such it is to be, but it is not yet complete. In 1 Peter ii. 5, living stones are spoken of as *being built* up ("New translation") a spiritual house, a house in building, not yet a complete habitation. Thus the work is being carried on by divine power, and will be until the last stone is brought in, and fitly set in its place, not one stone wanting or out of place, but the whole complete and perfect in all its parts to be the dwelling place of God.

It will be composed of the whole company of believers gathered out from Jews and Gentiles

from Pentecost until the time when the Lord comes again to receive His people to Himself.

The building in this aspect is never spoken of in connection with the work or responsibility of men, nor is it the sphere of human administration; it is never the scene of failure, and never the subject of judgment, and never could be, because God cannot judge that which is entirely and only His own work. When we think of the church in this sense we think of its perfection and stability, as that of every one who forms a part of it: also of our *future* privilege as that company which will form the eternal dwelling-place of God.

One of the greatest elements of man's blessing is to have God near to him. Thus, in Eden, God would come down and walk with man, and hold intercourse with him in the place where He had put him. So, when Israel were redeemed out of Egypt, God's thought was to dwell among them; as He said, "I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God." (Ex. xxix. 45.) For this purpose he directed them to build the tabernacle which was then His habitation. The desire of God to dwell among His people, though looking on to a future day, is expressed in Psalms lxviii. 16-18; cxxxii. 13, 14. This great blessing is enjoyed now by the church as the habitation of God by the Spirit, as we shall see when we come to consider it in this aspect. And the fact

that she *will* be a holy temple in the Lord as we have already seen, is one of the greatest elements in her future heavenly blessedness.

We have, secondly, to consider the other aspect in which the church is spoken of as a house or building for God now.

In Ephesians ii. 22, it is viewed in this phase as distinguished from that spoken of in the previous verses. Here the whole company of God's people living on the earth at that time, or at any time since, are spoken of as those who "*are* built together for an habitation of God in the Spirit." It is a *complete* habitation, so that God can, and does, dwell in it at the present time by the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians iii., it is spoken of as being characteristically the temple of God even now (not as growing up to be one another day).

In 1 Timothy iii., it is spoken of as being the *present* house of God, (not as being built up, but as already formed) in which Timothy is instructed as to how he should behave, and as to the proper order of it.

The church was constituted the *present* habitation of God on the *earth*, when, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and filled the house where the company of disciples were gathered together. Thus these one hundred and twenty disciples became the house of God, by the Holy Spirit taking up His abode among them.

Before this they were simply the godly Jewish remnant; now they became the house of God, the church of the living God. Such is the new character in which the assembly of those who belong to God on the earth is now viewed. At that time and ever since God has had a house on earth in which He has dwelt, into the outward privileges of which house are admitted all those who have been baptised unto Christ, who are thus publicly owned of God as outwardly connected with Him, in contradistinction to Jews and Gentiles, who, as such, are now both alike outside the sphere owned of God, as being at least in outward relationship with Him.

In the Acts we get the history of the way in which God added to this assembly so constituted in the beginning. All persons who professed to accept the testimony concerning Christ were baptised and thus admitted within this circle of blessing and privilege, the place where God dwelt, where the Holy Spirit wrought, and where shone the full light of God's present revelation to man. Outside of this all was destitution and darkness. We see therefore that the house in this sense was connected with human administration; men, those already inside, admitted by water baptism those who sought this privilege, on the ground of their profession. This gave room for failure. Men might admit such as should not be received, evil men being thus



allowed to come in; yet the admission of any who were not real, did not alter the reality of that into which they were admitted.

In John xx. 23, this authority of administration was conferred upon the disciples when the Lord breathed upon them and said, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; whose soever sins ye retain they are retained." In Acts ii., Peter, in answer to the cry of the people, "What shall we do?" exhorted them to "repent and be baptised for the remission of sins," and in baptising them thus, the apostles did sacramentally remit their sins, and received them into the place of external relationship with God.

We have another illustration of this in the case of Paul, when Ananias said to him, "Arise and get baptised and have thy sins washed away, calling on his name." (Acts xxii. 16.) It is plain that there is an outward visible system into which persons are sacramentally admitted, which is owned of God, and stands in outward relationship with Him, in which those who belong to it enjoy certain privileges, apart from the question of life, and vital, inward, and eternal relationship with God by a new nature and the Holy Spirit; in which persons are accepted according to their profession, and held responsible to act according to the light and privileges into the presence of which they have been brought.

In 1 Corinthians iii. 9, the assembly is spoken

of as being "God's building," and men are regarded as the builders. Paul says *he* had laid the foundation, and spoke of others building thereon, warning them as to how they built. They might build upon the true foundation good material, such as gold, silver, precious stones; or they might build on this foundation bad material, such as wood, hay, stubble. It is not here the Lord building living stones, fitly framed together, but *men* who are the builders, and this again gives room for failure on their part. Nevertheless the building is owned of God. As a whole it belongs to Him. In verses 16, 17, it is characterised as His temple; that is its highest and holiest character, what it will be finally without alloy; but now it is seen exposed to the evil work of evil men, and therefore in danger of being marred.

Note in this passage, as in 1 Corinthians vi. 19, there is a peculiarity in the way the temple is spoken of. In the Greek there is no article before the word used for "temple." It reads, "Do ye not know that ye are temple of God?" The effect of this is, that it states what they were *characteristically*, rather than saying that they were actually the temple of God now, though such the church will be; meantime it should have the character of what it will be finally.

According to 2 Timothy ii. 20, that which was

spoken of in the first epistle, as in its normal character being the house of God, the assembly of the living God, had become like a great house containing vessels to honour and vessels to dishonour. Those who were responsible for keeping the house of God in order had failed; they had allowed it to fall into terrible disorder, and to become the scene of iniquitous confusion; and such is the present state of the house of God. Yet God still owns the church as being His house, and holds every person in it responsible for that which becomes His house, and in the end will judge them if found unfaithful to this position in which they have stood in relation to Him.

This epistle reminds us of Ezekiel viii., where God took the prophet, and shewed him the evils which were being done in His house, which eventually led God to give up that house, and to judge the evil done in it. (Matt. xxi. 12; xxiii. 38.) So will it be with the present house of God; the evil allowed in it will eventually lead to God giving up the church as His habitation on the earth. Those in it who are really His own, will be taken to heaven when the Lord comes for us, while the rest of it will be left to become Babylon, the false church of the Revelation, and to be the first thing on which the direct judgment of God will fall to its final destruction. Thus He will mark with His special displeasure that which is doubly evil because done in His

house, and connected with the form of godliness.

Even now it is the sphere of the exercise of God's government on the earth, so that 1 Peter iv. 17, speaks of the time being come when judgment must begin at the house of God; and in his second epistle he shews that the judgment which has already begun at the house of God, will eventually overtake evil wherever found.

Whatever has been intrusted by God to man's responsibility, has always been marked by man's failure and sin, and so become the object of God's judgment. We have seen that man's responsibility has been tested in connection with the church, the house of God. He has been tested as a builder, as an administrator, and as a keeper, and he has failed in each of these characters; he has built in bad material, admitted wrong persons, and, instead of keeping the house in order, has allowed it to become the scene of disorder and confusion. We have seen too how the church as Christ's building, the fruit of His wisdom and work, always fitly framed together, ends in perfection, in that which can be presented to God as a holy temple, fit vessel of His glorious presence. But in contrast to this, we have seen that the church, as the present house of God, connected with man's work, soon began to deteriorate, and, falling into confusion and ruin, ends in the judgment of God. This we also gather from the

history of the church, as the vessel of testimony on the earth, given us in Revelation ii. and iii. It is finally spued out of Christ's mouth as that which He can own no longer.

Man's history wherever he has been proved, is one of failure from first to last, thus making way for Christ to come in as "The amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

When we consider the church as the present house of God upon the earth, we think of the immense privilege of a company having God dwelling among them by the Spirit, participating in all the blessings which accompany His presence; but we think also of the responsibility of the whole collective company, and of every one forming a part of it, standing in this relation to God, because it is said, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever"; and He will in His righteous government vindicate His holiness in those who are near to Him.

We may think of the church, then, as that which is connected with Christ's building, where all is fitly framed together, growing up to a perfect temple for God in the end; or we may think of it as connected with the building and responsibility of man, marked by the imperfection attaching to everything which man touches, ending in confusion and ruin, and falling by the judgment of God. We may think of it as composed

only of those born of God, in vital relationship with Him by the Holy Spirit, each one enjoying individually by faith all the spiritual and eternal blessings of God's people; or we may think of it as composed of all those who have professedly accepted the truth, owning Christ, calling Him Lord, and who have been admitted by baptism to the *outward* participation in all the great and blessed privileges of God's house.

In speaking of God dwelling in His house, it is necessary to draw attention to what is often not clearly apprehended; namely, the difference between God dwelling by His Spirit in the assembly viewed in its corporate aspect, and His dwelling in the individual believer. Both these things are true, but they are entirely different in themselves, and distinct one from the other. In Acts ii. 2, 3, we see the distinction between these two actions of the Holy Spirit: first, He filled the house where the disciples were sitting, and likewise the spiritual house which they were collectively; secondly, He sat upon each one of them individually. In Acts viii. 14-16, we see that souls were admitted into the house of God, before they had individually received the Holy Spirit; they had been baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus, but as yet the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon any of them. In 1 Corinthians iii. 16, 17, the assembly is spoken of as being characteristically God's temple; and in 1 Corin-

thians vi. 19, the individual saint is spoken of in the same way as the temple of God.

Much more might be said, but my object has been to draw attention to the two different aspects in which Scripture views the church as a building or house for God, with the hope that God may use what has been written for edification, and for clearing away the confusion which still exists in the minds of many on this subject.

F. H. B.

The world which Christ has left must be to us a place of patience. We do not want the flesh-pots of earth, if Christ have a place in our hearts. We are not only waiting for *something*; we are waiting for *Himself*. Our hopes and joys are all packed up and gone. I do not wait for events, though they will come; I wait for God's Christ, and I love Him, and He possesses my soul, until He who has emptied Himself for me, and has emptied my heart for Himself, shall come and take me to Himself.

(J. N. D.)

## THE MYSTERY.

COLOSSIANS II. 1-10.

WE see in the opening verse of this chapter how earnestly the apostle desired the truth he was bringing before them to be apprehended in power by the saints to whom he was writing. He was *most* anxious that they should know it. He says, "What great conflict I have for you;" it is a strong word. There was something standing in the way; there was something hindering their apprehension of it. And, on his side, it was not a thing that it was easy to present to them; so that he could speak of his own feelings with regard to the matter, not only as even a *conflict*, but as a "*great conflict*." And this truth that caused him so much anxiety was *the mystery*.

I have been surprised to find how little people know what the mystery is, and yet it is of the utmost importance that they should know it. The reason why the apostle so desired the saints at Colosse to know it, was because he saw that they were exposed to a snare. Now people often



think that they know enough truth, but nothing protects from a snare but truth in power. The Colossians were in danger of religiousness of a twofold character: one, which appealed to the mind, we should call rationalism at the present time; the other, which affected the body, we should call ritualism. The danger of the saints, then, was a compound composed of these two things, which affected both mind and body.

The flesh comes before us in Colossians, but the flesh in a special way. There are three great intrusions of the flesh. In Corinthians it is levity: there it is, I am saved, but now I will do as I like. In Galatians it is, as in the reformed churches: making the law the rule of life. But in Colossians it is quite different. Here it is: a *religious* man. I cannot dwell upon the subject now; it is not my object to do so; I do not wish to dwell upon the bad side, for it is our great and precious privilege to maintain and know the good, and the more I do that, the more I ward off the bad.

What I wish then to bring before you this evening is the mystery which the apostle was so anxious that the Colossians should enter into.

Possibly very many of you could give a very clear definition of the mystery, who yet may not have reached to "the full assurance of understanding" it. "Full assurance" here does not mean

that I am *sure* of it, but that I understand the *weight* of it. And the word "knowledge" does not mean simply *knowing* a thing, but possessing *complete* knowledge of it. If we have this, we shall never be drawn aside from it to the false thing, to religiousness in man.

It is astonishing the way in which religiousness will come out; it even may in the singing of a hymn. I often used to wonder at that word to Timothy: "Put the brethren in remembrance of these things;" it seemed to me astonishing that the apostle should need to warn against Romanism a church that held the very highest truth. But the very worst thing comes from spurious sanctity. Nothing does so much damage to the real thing as a counterfeit of it; it deludes souls into the belief that they have got the real thing.

Now if a Colossian listened to the reading of this Epistle, he would say: Is the apostle really so interested about us? The least thing then that we can do, is to be interested about ourselves, and seek to understand what he has written to us. And any here to-night who do not know it, I desire that you may lift up your heart to God and say, Teach it me. As to any who *do* know, I am sure they desire to know more. For myself I feel every day how little I really enter into it. It is a truth that will affect me in everything as I understand it. ~

If we turn to the beginning of the Epistle, we read: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of your love which ye have to all the saints." Now from this we should have thought the Colossians in such a good state that they would not require to be watched over with this great anxiety. But it is like a good physician, who might say, You are in very good health at the present moment, but still I am exceedingly anxious about you, for there is a terrible epidemic going, and I fear it for you. God always deals with His people in this way; He gives us truth as preventive of evil. He gives us a summer before a winter, that we may be prepared for the dark days. That is, He gives us special truth, to preserve us from a danger thus impending; just as God gave Elijah a double portion of food before his forty days' journey. Thus the Colossians were exposed to the snare; and as the apostle feared their falling into, and wished to guard them from it, he opened out to them the truth of the mystery.

Before passing on to this, I would first say a word on verse 23 of the first chapter. Here we find, as every student of Scripture knows, that there are two ministries: one, the ministry of the gospel; the other, the ministry of the church, which is the mystery.

First, as to the ministry of the gospel. It is purely and entirely individual. On the other hand, that of the church is entirely corporate. Now if souls only go as far as the ministry of the gospel, they never reach the corporate thing at all. Christ is preached; the good tidings of salvation through His blood is proclaimed, all which Christ did for *me*. If I take David and Jonathan as an illustration of it, I find that Jonathan has received a most wonderful benefit from the hand of David. He was in a state of fear until he saw the head of Goliath in the hand of David; but then he enjoys his saviour David, who has removed the cause of his fear. He is now set in the state of David. David's victory is his victory. To all intents and purposes he is as David. In type, "As he is so are we in this world;" surely a state which cannot be surpassed.

Now I believe, and I speak it anxiously, that there is a lack in the way in which the gospel is preached. I delight at the way in which God blesses souls, but I feel that it is more the Goliath side that is known, than the David side, if I might so say.

Now God's thought is to set up a soul in a divine contrast to the misery in the spot of his misery. Nothing can satisfy the heart of God, but that the soul shall be set up to His own satisfaction in the spot where it was in utmost misery. No language can convey it, no human

tongue can tell it; but nothing can satisfy the heart of my Father in heaven but that I should be here, in this scene where everything tells the tale of my departure and distance from Him, in the very joy and blessing in which He is Himself.

Souls often understand grace without understanding *love*. I must say one word about love. Love delights in its object, and it must remove everything that bars it from its object. Now love as to natural beings goes out to what we call its "ideal." God too has His standard. He cannot find it in us, but we read that we shall be "conformed to the image of His Son." So that now we can say with the apostle: "As he is, so are we in this world."

But souls are not ready to go on to the immensity that is involved in the doctrine of the body of Christ, of the mystery, because they are not clear about the first ministry, that of the gospel. There is not a particle of relationship between Jonathan and David; there never was, though David was his saviour; there is no mystery there. Therefore all we can learn in them is only the ministry of the gospel; there is not a shadow of anything more.

But in the gospel He has not only saved us from our fear, but He has placed us in power and blessedness in the very spot of our misery. See how He addresses the woman of Samaria. Does

He say, When you get to heaven it will be all right with you? No! but here in Samaria! *Here* you shall have a new character; here you shall go on in another way; here you shall be a new kind of person altogether; here you shall "never thirst;" here is the place in which "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The Lord Himself was so delighted with the Father's work that He had done for this poor woman, that, when His disciples brought Him meat, He could not eat.

Again in Mark, where we find Him as the perfect servant. Is it an unclean spirit? is it a fever? is it the leper? is it the palsy? He can relieve the human family of everything that afflicts it. But in chapter v. it is something more. He says: I will not only relieve this poor man of his sufferings, but I will bring him out in a new way in the very spot of his sufferings. "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee." And he departed and did so, and all marvelled. I just mention these two cases that we may have a more magnificent idea of the ministry of the gospel.

Now as to the other ministry, that of the church, of the mystery, Paul says he speaks of that "according to the dispensation of God" which was given to him. The first thing about it is,

that it was a secret, a "mystery," "from the beginning of the world." Yet all the way through the Old Testament there were glimpses of it. Just as the father of a family, who has a secret that he is bound not to disclose, yet now and then cannot help giving a hint of it. So at different times, all through the Old Testament, we get glimpses of the mystery. No sooner was creation completed than Adam and Eve foreshadowed it. Then Abraham sent for a bride for his son across the desert. Next we find Joseph and Asenath united to him in his rejection and separation from his brethren. Then Moses with a bride in Midian. And then David and Abigail. And when the Lord Himself was upon earth, He gave many hints of the same. He could tell of the man seeking goodly pearls, and finding "*a pearl of great price*." Is that your idea of the church? Have you the thought that there is something so lovely on earth that a pearl of great price is a picture of it? Do you go about the world with the feeling that, in the midst of all this evil, and tumult, and upheaving, there is something so precious to the heart of God in it? You answer, Yes. Then you believe in the mystery.

But I have not told you what it is. I turn to Matthew xxii. 44, where it is written: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." But

there is nothing about the mystery there, you say. No, nothing; but still there is a great point in it, which if you do not understand you will never understand the mystery. It is that Christ has been rejected from the earth.

There was one thing that Satan was always set against, and that was Christ being upon the earth. No sooner was He born into this world, than the king of the Jews commanded all the infants under two years of age to be slain, in order that God's Son might be swept off the face of the earth. And eventually, Jew and Gentile united to put Him to death. Thus they turned Him out of the earth; and God says to Him: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Mark the opposition to Him. *They will not* have Him here. Now turn to Acts vii. 55, and read the words for yourselves to get the power of them into your souls. "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." That is all I want now. The believer on earth sees his Saviour in heaven! God grant that every one of us may see Him there too!

Now what did the Jews do to Stephen for saying this? They killed him for it. Peter had proposed to them that Christ should come back to them, but they will not have Him. And now, the rejection being a completed thing, Christ



having been rejected both on earth and from heaven, comes the time for divulging the secret.

And what is it? That though Christ Himself has been rejected, *His body is on earth. That* is the secret! Would you not feel differently about everything if you believed it?

We never get it described until now. We find it first in Acts ix. 4: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?" It is not *belonging* to me, or *part* of me, but *me*. In that little word is conveyed the fact that Christ is *here*. If a man struck me on the foot I should not say, he has struck my *foot*, but, he has struck *me*.

But this is a subject that is sure to be opposed. People cannot bear the fact that the body of Christ is here. They will stand anything else, but they will not hear of this.

In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul speaks of it as a great mystery, and turns to Eve to illustrate it, for "she was taken out of man;" in like manner, "we are members of his body." Thus the secret is divulged, and I pray you to get hold of it; this fact that the pearl is here; that the treasure is hidden in the field; and that this is Christ's one delight on earth, His one interest.

Now let us turn to 1 Corinthians xii. to see how this body is constructed. We read: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one

Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This is how it is formed.

But I must here dwell for a moment on the fact, that no one can understand the formation of the church unless he believes that the Holy Ghost is here residing on the earth, in the house of God. I do not think that people generally believe this, though they believe that the Holy Ghost is dwelling in believers *individually*. Now in Acts ii. we read that on the day of Pentecost He first filled *the house* where they were sitting, then He filled all those who were there also. When He had thus filled those who were sitting there, the house was not any the less filled, was it? Certainly not. It is the Holy Ghost who has come down from heaven who baptises all the members into *one body*. And it is just as easy for Him to connect a saint in Australia with me, as the one sitting next to me. You will never comprehend the formation of a body unless you believe in the ubiquity of the Spirit.

In reading Psalm cxxxix. we find these two subjects in connection : " Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning,

and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." And the formation of a body ; these two subjects together, though not referring to the church.

There is therefore evidently no geographical limit to the Spirit of God. It is no difficulty to the Holy Ghost to bind souls together, however remote from one another. Hence "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." For instance, a man hurts his finger, and at once he stops walking and looks at it. He might as well have gone *on* walking, for his feet were not hurt. No, he says, but my *finger* is, and I cannot go on. But, you argue, I cannot act to a brother in Australia as I can to one near to me. True ; and therefore in Romans and Ephesians, where the brother near you is spoken of, he is called your "neighbour." The man in Australia cannot be your *neighbour*, but he is none the less your *brother*.

Now Satan sought to extirpate Christ from the earth ; but in the very place from whence He has been rejected are now found multitudes of saints to represent Him, baptised into one body by the Holy Ghost. Romanism has sought to give an exhibition of this unity by insisting on a liturgy which shall be the same and in one form and the same language all over the world. This

was the work of the natural mind certainly ; but there is no greater enemy to the church of God than the natural mind. So we find in Revelation that the direst enemy of Christ is that which is professedly the church of God.

The Holy Ghost has two actions upon earth. One is, He comforts the saints ; the other is, He stands for Christ. And many know Him as the Comforter who know nothing of Him as the One who "shall testify of me."

If we turn now to Ephesians ii. we find a point of immense interest. Many a one who accepts the truth that we *are* bound together is not clear as to *what* is bound together. It certainly is not the bad thing in us. It is the *good* thing that is bound together ; it is the new nature which we have received from God. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Jew in nature is done with, and the Gentile is done with ; but He makes of both one new man, and all are united together, and to Christ the Head. The special position of the church through all eternity will be that it is united to Christ. In chapter v. we read : "No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church ; for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." And this, he adds, "is a great mystery."

This is the whole point, not only has Christ

done the greatest work for me, but He has put me also in the closest relationship to Him. He is my Head. I cannot, then, use my own head; the blunders we make are all from using our own heads instead of following His guidance. As to the nature of the union the marriage tie falls short; it is a relationship that all types fall short of. I can only say that Scripture states it, and so I *believe* it. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are "hid" in it. My hand writes something; you ask, How did you get that? I answer, From my head. What a wonderful thing it would be if we could say of everything we did, I got that from Christ; He alone is my Head.

I do not believe we have the least conception of what a wonderful place we are set in; "rivers of water" flowing from us; not getting anything from this poor world, but, on the contrary, contributing to it (this individually), while corporately I participate in the wisdom, grace and glory of that blessed One who has brought me into this place on earth; for the glory of our corporate position is, that what belongs to the Head belongs to each one of the members. As an individual I never enjoy anything until I have practical possession of it. But as a member of Christ's body, I can say I have a place in heaven. I may not be *enjoying* it, but still I *have* it.

If we turn to 1 Kings x., we find a scripture

which explains this. You remember that the queen of Sheba came all the way from her country to see king Solomon ; and when she beheld all his riches, and glory, and magnificence, "there was no more spirit in her." Now I turn to this passage merely by way of *contrast* ; and I ask what is the difference between the church's relation to Christ, and the queen of Sheba's relation to Solomon ? The queen of Sheba was there only as a spectator ; she was so entranced with all she saw that there was no more spirit left in her. But does that convey to us the church's position ? No ; the church is a *participator*, not a spectator. If the queen of Sheba could have understood that she was allied to Solomon as closely as his own body to his head, do you think she would ever have gone away from Jerusalem ? Certainly not.

Thus I get a test by which to discover whether a person really knows the mystery. If they know what it is to be members of the body of Christ, they are satisfied with nothing short of Christ's place. The church can have no other place but where Christ is. A person sees the mystery if he sees that he can have his joys, his pleasures, in no other place but where the Head is. God has made us complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power.

So that in dealing with a soul I first seek to portray to him the greatness of God's grace in

putting a sinner in a place of freedom from all fear, of salvation from his enemy ; and, when he is clear as to that, I tell him that he is a member of the body of Christ. He thus not only rejoices in His work, but he participates in all that He is.

One word more. Practice corroborates even a divine theory ; therefore, if what I have stated is the truth, the practice will confirm it. Now we find the practice in chapter iii. First, we are to "Set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth." It does not say in the *world* ; many a man is earthly who is not worldly. The earth is in contrast to heaven ; the world, to the Father. And then we read farther on : "Christ is all and in all." Christ is *all* ; He is everything ; it does not leave room for *anything* else. Then, I say, this truth as to the mystery would affect my life in everything. For instance I might write a letter rather sharply, and then ask myself, would the Lord write that letter ? If not, then do not send it. We have a Head in heaven, who would use us just as we use our hand.

Lastly : "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." I believe that is the testimony ; to do everything in His name. Nothing ought to be more delightful to us. Just as any affectionate husband or wife would say, You need not *tell* me to do such or such a thing : I *delight* to. Do everything in His name : our furniture, our dress, no matter

what it is. I am delighted that He has not imposed anything less upon me. I know that nothing can carry such virtue and blessedness with it as doing everything in His name.

I can only add, that I do not know anything that has had a more vivifying effect on my own heart, than the fact that the Lord has an object of delight and interest and love upon this earth, and that He has called us to share His interest and delight and joy in it.

(J. B. S.)

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The men who had the God of heaven for them and with them in the furnace, became marked men : men whose bands were burnt off. Every time you have been faithful to God, you will find it standing by you as a constant mark ; and you will have found the blessing of God with you in the furnace too.

(G. V. W.)



## FAITH AND HOPE.

DANIEL I. 3-17; III. 1, 8-29; VI. 1-24.

I HAVE read these passages at some length, beloved friends, because I desire that the very words of Scripture should be fresh in our minds whilst considering the subjects of intense interest which they bring before us, and in the hope that the Lord will give blessing to His own word.

Faith in God, you will see at once, is the leading characteristic of these incidents; and it is of this I speak. I am specially anxious, however, that we should form the habit of examining more carefully that which sometimes assumes the appearance, and receives the name, of faith, when in reality it can claim to be nothing more than hope.

It is important, therefore, for us to inquire what faith is, and what it is not; to ascertain what it calls us to be, to do, and to suffer; to know what we become under its power, and what we are, and shall be, without it; especially when we remember that we are in a scene where all that is real and lasting is invisible, discernible only by faith. Not that faith of itself is enough.

The Spirit of God must be in it. For there is a natural faith which can do great things in a human way, without any divine power, motive, or object. Whereas a divine faith will be characterised by three things: it will be led by the Spirit of God, instructed by the word of God, and sustained by the power of God. It must, therefore, reach its end without fail. It is infallible and invincible.

And in this it differs from hope, with which I fear it is sometimes confounded. Wrong labels are used, and what is really only hope in the soul is called faith, and much confusion brought in thereby. If I see something before me that I desire, I may have *either* faith or hope about it; but I ought to be clear as to which it is. If I am led by the Spirit of God to desire it, and am assured by the word of God that I may have it, and am sustained by the power of God in pursuing it, I may be sure I have *faith*; otherwise it is only *hope*.

“Have you faith for this?” is often asked. Before I answer, I ought surely to be clear that I *may* have faith for it. If the flesh has any part in my desire, or if the word of God does not authorise my counting upon it, on what ground can I say I have faith for it? I may have hope, and even reasonable hope, and the thing may come to pass too, yet I dare not say I have had faith about it; and the soul that ven-

tures to say so is injured thereby. These three conditions, I maintain, must be fulfilled ere I am justified in saying I have *faith*.

We are *saved* by faith; we are *justified* by faith; we *live* by faith, &c.; and in all these it is faith. There are divine authority, guidance, and power. But where these are not present there can be only hope, as we find indeed to our sorrow too often. How many we meet who never even lay claim to more than hope, even in the matter of salvation! Why? Because they have never seen the *ground* for faith, namely, the work of the cross, the occupant of the throne, and the positive assurance of the word of God, that "He that believeth *hath* everlasting life;" that "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," or set apart, as having life in Him. And this defect characterises their creed and mars their whole course as Christians, crippling them continually. *They* do not go far enough; they only hope where they ought to believe; *others* go too far and profess to believe where they can only hope. A true perception of this distinction makes things wonderfully clear, and opens the door for much blessing. It prevents disappointment; it keeps things in their proper order; and it saves the character of God from dishonour, and the word of God from discredit.

I might add here also, for the sake of some

who have overlooked it, that faith itself has two aspects: one, that of *believing*; the other, that of *trusting*. Believing is simply receiving something on the evidence or testimony of another. Having no evidence of your own, you receive that which some one else brings. Now *trusting* in that which is thus received ought always to follow, and generally does in worldly matters, because the witness of men is so readily accepted. But when the evidence of God's word is all men have to rest upon, alas! how feeble too often is their acceptance of it, and therefore how imperfect their confidence in it!

I fear that sometimes the *activity* of faith, that is *trusting*, is attempted before the truth on which it is to trust has been received; and hence unrest and uncertainty are the result. Faith that *receives* the word of God with a little child's *belief*, is a faith that *trusts* the Son of God with a little child's *confidence*. Faith that attempts to trust before receiving, is like one running in the dark over a dangerous and unknown ground, or like a mariner who steers across the pathless deep without an authentic chart or a trustworthy compass.

Evidently, therefore, "without faith it is impossible to please God," or even one's own soul, which ever craves the certainty of a complete and sufficient testimony. But *with this* what wonders faith can work! Yea, what wonders it

has wrought, as the Scriptures testify from beginning to end. How strikingly Hebrews xi. stands out as a record of what faith has done, encouraging and strengthening to the end the saints of God when cast exclusively upon Him!

So with the children of the captivity in Daniel. There it *is* faith, without any doubt; no mere hoping, but sublime and godlike faith. Oh that such faith may be displayed *now*, and that, in these last days, the Lord may have those in testimony for Himself who shall possess the same unswerving, uncompromising faith which we love to admire in these captives of Babylon! It is indeed a solemn moment for us. Ancient landmarks are being removed, and the saints of God, exposed to many curious and subtle wiles, are tempted on every hand to depart from the narrow path, to concede, to amalgamate, to tolerate evil, so that a pleasant and easy (but unholy) fellowship may be maintained in the very place of professed separation!

Let us look at these illustrious captives for a moment. In Daniel i., four men, chosen for their natural attractions, their birth, their beauty, their education, are appointed to be fed with the king's meat in a place, and at a time, when positive separation from the world and exclusive dependence upon God are demanded. This would be defilement, and they refuse. Daniel, acting for the rest, "purposed in his heart that

he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Moreover God had to be honoured among these uncircumcised; and to feed and fatten on the king's meat would be but poor testimony for Him! It would be in reality to enrich the king at His expense; to transfer to him the honour due alone to God. Yea more, it would be to take that which was specially devoted to God in the land of exile, wherewith to adorn the retinue of an earthly court and of the conqueror of God's people in that land; robbing God in order to enrich and exalt man!

And is not this the very thing men seek to do now? How plausible the guise, how specious the reasoning by which a saint may be persuaded to abandon the ground of testimony, and connect himself pleasantly and affably with the enemies of God! But "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God," under whatever name it goes?

What powerful arguments could have been used by these four men for concession and submission to the ruler's decree! How forcibly the plea of necessity could have been urged; and the assurance, too, that it was not in heart but only in form, and for a time, and under constraint! But this was a language unknown to faith. In meekness and gentleness, certainly, let us obey the powers that be; but always in harmony

with the word of God, as in Acts iv., when "Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." These four men listened to no such pleas, kept the eye single and fixed above, and, despite all that could be said in favour of it, *they refused fellowship with the world.*

Yes, beloved, this it is that has to be discerned now, by us, as our special danger. How manifold are the forms of seduction! We must be on our guard indeed, and "Forasmuch as Christ has suffered for us 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." (1 Pet. iv.) We need surely to "abound yet more and more in the full knowledge and all intelligence," (or fine perception) of Philippians i. 9, "that we may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent;" that we may keep ourselves unspotted from the world, our hearts weaned, and our hands clean, and clear from all fellowship with it, however plausible its claims, however tempting its rewards, however painful its penalties; ever purposing in our heart not to defile ourselves with the king's meat.

Then in Daniel iii., we have another scene,

where three men, under tremendous pressure, resolutely *refuse conformity to the world*. This is another point for us now, though approaching us, it may be, in a different manner. The three faithful witnesses of God at that time were required to do homage to the idolatrous image which king, lords and commons, with one consent had lifted into Jehovah's place. No, say they, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up, not even under the threat of the burning fiery furnace. And when defied by the impious question: "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" they calmly answered: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. *But if not*, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." What confidence in God! What obedience is this! What a bold and decided stand for God, under the severest strain to which faith can be exposed!

But was there no skilful reservation that would enable them to escape the difficulty? Could they not conform outwardly, whilst inwardly retaining allegiance to Jehovah? Would it do *Him* any harm? or any one else in fact? Nay, if they appeared to be contumacious, might it not bring



dishonour on Jehovah's name, and endanger the whole body of captives, bringing unnecessary suffering on thousands? And for what purpose? What end would be gained by persistent refusal? And then think of the penalty! Think of the furnace roaring with sevenfold fury, presenting a death of the most horrible, appalling, excruciating character! Will it not really partake more of self-will and obstinacy than of faithful allegiance to God if we refuse?

Thus the enemy would parley, as indeed he does with all of us still, more or less. What can be more obvious than the same Satanic spirit at work amongst us at this moment? I need not enlarge. I feel how forcibly the case itself speaks, and how every sensitive conscience must acknowledge its power, and, I trust, surrender to it also. On every hand, in many a form, the enemy is enticing us to come down from an elevation which he seeks to degrade by holding it up to ridicule and contempt, representing it as Pharisaism, self-conceit, and assumed superiority. Only come down a little, slightly bend and bow the head to the golden glittering image of peaceful pleasant conformity, and all will be well, and no harm done! Ah, yes; but the cloven foot is too visible in all this. The Lord preserve us all, young and old, from such insidious wiles, "Lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve by his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted

from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Cor. xi.) No *fellowship with the world*; no *conformity to the world*. Let this be the ground on which, in all humility and dependence on God, but in unflinching fidelity, we take our stand now as these noble men did then!

Once more, in Daniel vi., we have another scene of similar import. One man now stands before us with all the calm holy dignity of a divine faith. He, too, has to refuse the world's claim, not for fellowship, nor for conformity, but for *obedience* to its prohibitory mandate: You shall not approach the presence of Jehovah in prayer! "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

Mark these words, "*as he did aforetime.*" Is not this exceedingly beautiful, presenting as it does such a lovely combination of power and gentleness, of grace and truth! Daniel would not yield for one moment to the pressure of the enemy without, and deny his God; nor would he listen to the whisperings of the enemy within, and make a parade of his faithfulness to God, displaying his devotions in a marked and ostentatious manner, and going beyond his customary habits as if defiantly to

challenge persecution. No, it was simply "as he did aforetime." A word for us, on two points: neither on the one hand to cringe to a foe when a confession of faith has to be made; nor on the other to irritate him by needless and boastful parade. We need the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove; and these in union with that faith which staggered not even in view of the lion's den.

The king himself, we observe, quailed as he thought of it. For though on the previous evening he had confidently said, "Thy God will deliver thee," yet, after an anxious and sleepless night, he cried with a lamentable voice to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, *is thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?*" Here we see the difference between faith and hope. With Daniel it was proved to be *faith* when he went into the den; with the king it was proved to be *hope* when he drew near and said, "Is thy God able to deliver thee?" It was labelled *faith* the night before; now it is discovered to be only *hope*. Is not the trying of our faith precious then, beloved, that we may know of a truth what is in our heart? Therefore we read that "no manner of hurt was found upon Daniel *because he believed in his God.*"

It is not a little interesting, I think, to notice the similarity between Satan's plan of attack on

our Lord when, in the wilderness, he assailed Him in person, and that which he pursued through the instrumentality of others when his object was to destroy the testimony of faithful witnesses in Babylon.

In both cases the temptation begins with food ; the weakest point, the natural appetites, are assailed first. Act independently of God as to the nourishment of the *body*, is the demand ; and in both it is refused. Our Lord said, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat."

Then again, "Fall down and worship me," said the devil to Christ. "Fall down and worship the golden image," said Nebuchadnezzar. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," replied the blessed and obedient Son of God. "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter," said the three faithful ones before the mouth of the furnace ; He *can* deliver, and He *will* deliver. BUT IF NOT, we are ready to be offered up rather than dishonour and deny our God. Oh, this is faith, faith of the highest order ! As with Job of old, "Though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Nothing can shake the confidence of such men in their God. It is far above all circumstances. Whatsoever

He doeth is right and faithful and true, no matter what becomes of us ; for "He is the faithful and true Witness," who Himself has said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it."

A third attempt is made in both cases ; eliciting from the Lord the simple reply, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God ;" and from Daniel the eloquent action which unequivocally refuses to tempt God by anything either more or less than that which "he did aforetime."

These are striking examples of faith, beloved, and for our admonition too, shewing clearly what faith is and what it is not ; and how, through the grace of God, it can make the unseen more real than the seen, and can shape a course on earth, though involving loss and shame and suffering, after the pattern of the will of God, and in the power of implicit confidence in Him.

The Lord in His rich mercy give such power to His own in these perilous times that they may *refuse fellowship with the world*, even in seemingly trifling and innocent things ; *refuse conformity to the world* in any of its ways, whether ecclesiastical or secular ; and *refuse obedience to the world* in its unholy demand, however presented, for a practical denial of the testimony committed to them.

( T. L. )

## “ONE THING.”

MARK x. 17-27; PSALM xxvii. 4-6.

THE connection of these two scriptures is exceedingly interesting because of the repetition of the same words in them: “One thing.” Whilst in the young man in Mark x. there was one thing that was lacking, with the saint, as in the Psalmist, there was, on the other hand, one thing that was commanding his whole moral being. It is these two things that it is impressed upon my heart to say a word to you upon this morning.

In Mark the scripture is important to us, in that it comes in in that part of the Lord’s instructions in which He upholds that which God had set up at the beginning, and which the Lord Himself therefore always maintains. The Lord always vindicated everything which God originally formed—all that which we sometimes say “belongs to the old creation,” whereas we ought to say, I think, more properly, the *former* creation. Everything that was instituted by God then, was always upheld and honoured by the Lord Jesus

Christ, as we find it here in respect of the marriage tie and of children. It is beautiful the way in which He, as God's servant upon earth, upholds all that is of God.

But then comes in what is exceedingly solemn for us : the cross is brought in as a test for the heart.

Three things are distinctly grouped together in this chapter. First, natural relationships; second, the law; and third, the word of Christ. This young man wants to do some good thing; his natural heart desires it; and this desire is met, first, by the law, and then by the cross of Christ. It is striking to see the effect of these things on this young man.

Now we must notice that the law never tested this young man's heart at all. *As far as man could see*, he had kept it. No doubt it was merely an outward, exterior obedience, but still he had rendered this outside obedience; and as a creature of God it was beautiful, and it was appreciated by the Lord Jesus Christ as such. He had rendered obedience to the law in an outward way; he could truly say, "All these have I observed from my youth;" and this entitled him to the credit of having walked in its precepts. The Lord does not bring him in as not having done it. He beheld him and loved him. There was that as a creature which God could love.

But then the probe comes in : *the cross*. It is, "Come, take up the cross, and follow me." He had that which in nature is in itself beautiful ; it was not bad things ; it was all that was attractive. But, and I do not know anything more solemn, it will not go at all with Christ. The best side of man counts for nothing here. Have we all accepted this ? The thing that is beautiful, the thing that is excellent, the thing which commanded the Lord's respect, which He could fully own and recognise, the thing that is creature excellence, *that thing will not go with Christ*.

And the instant the cross is brought in, the man is manifested in his true light and colours. "One thing thou lackest," says the Lord ; "go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved." He was priding himself upon keeping the law ; but, when the Lord says to him : Go, sell what thou hast, and come and share my path of shame, and scorn, and despicability on the earth, and follow me ; he departs sorrowful and disappointed.

The highest way to see the truth is to see it as a revelation from God. To see it in the lives of people on earth is not the same thing. When it comes to us direct from God, His word carries all its weight and authority to our souls. I may



then see the *effect* of it coming out in different instances, and in the lives of men upon earth, but I have learnt it from God Himself. Still, if you have to do much with souls you will find often this very same thing. You will find that, whilst there are many who accept Christ's work as securing them from coming judgment, yet if you press upon them the cross of Christ, they shrink from it in great dread. This is what marks professing Christianity in the present day, and I think we are all in danger of being ensnared by it. God has opened out to us an immense amount of truth, but the more we know of truth, and the more truth we *have*, the more the devil seeks to draw us from it. It is not to be wondered at when a person who does not know the truth presents inconsistencies in life and walk, but it is a serious thing when such are found in one who does. Of such it can be said as it was of Israel long ago : "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you."

In marvellous ways I believe God, in the present day, is calling His people back to Christ's path through this world. It is now a question of abnegating ourselves in every direction. It is "One thing thou lackest ; sell that thou hast ; take up the cross, and follow me." "Oh, I know that scripture very well," people say ; "but what does it *mean* ?" Well, to my mind, it is the most solemn warning that can be.

In Luke xii. we find an analogous passage. He first brings in God's care for His people: "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." And, when He has thus secured the allegiance of the heart for God, He says, "Sell that ye have;" for only now they can afford to do so.

This young man came to ask the Lord what good thing he could do. He believed man was capable of doing a good thing. He saw in Christ all that was excellent, all that was good in a creature; for he did not go beyond the fact of what he saw in Him outwardly; he did not see that He was the Christ of God. He saw the superlative degree of what goodness in man was in Christ; his thought was: Good master, you are the best specimen of it that I can find upon earth. He was not like the Philippian jailer: he did not want to be *saved*, he wanted to do some good thing; he had not got to the end of himself; it was creature excellence that was filling his mind, and he thought he possessed that himself. So the Lord takes him on his own ground, and says: "*One thing thou lackest.*" But to lack that *one thing* was to lack *everything*; it was to lack all that can be conceived.

And this is not a question that touches merely one or another of us. I believe it relates to every one of us. That which the Lord states here, should be the moving principle in every

one of our souls, based on the knowledge of having found treasure in a new region altogether, so that we can afford to let all here go. I do not know anything more wonderful than to see a person who can afford to turn the back entirely on the world. Our hands and our feet may be called to certain work here, but I say, Is your *heart* in it? Your hands may be, and your feet may be, but where is your *heart*? Never was a more solemn instance of it than the one we find here. He *could not* break with it. If it came to be a question of getting rid of all this in order to be a follower of Christ, then he could not be one.

I have thought lately that we limit that word "covetousness" in a way that Scripture does not. What is covetousness? It is the *love of possession*, from the smallest desire that can be conceived to the greatest possible thing. I believe covetousness is a very common thing amongst us. And why? I will tell you. It is because we want something *here*. It is not necessarily money. If I want a place here, a portion here of any kind, it is covetousness. So this young man. "He had great *possessions*," and they clogged his heart.

We are most of us little aware of the moral state of the day in which we live, and perhaps it is well for us that so many of us do not know. I may now say it will be found that

the whole drift of what is pressed in the popular books of the present time, and in an attractive way too, is the utter break-down, the practical failure of Christianity in representing the walk of Christ upon earth. And the principle is worked out too in a way that is exceedingly insidious to hearts. The false thing is built up and established by the break-down of the people of God in walking in Christ's path upon earth.

As to ourselves, I fear that there has not been a maintenance of the practical thing as a whole, and that is the reason the truth has got such a slight hold of our hearts. We have not *practised* it. How can I go into the battle, said David, with armour that I have not proved? I do feel that the Lord has a special voice to His people on this point; for, if principle and faith do not characterise us, we are the most contemptible people on the earth. With all the truth we have, the more condemned are we if devotedness to Christ is not there. What a path *Christ's path!* “Follow *me.*” I repeat it, What a path! Take up your cross and follow *me.* Whom? An out-cast! One who was scorned, who was hated, who was despised; who had but a manger at his birth; a cross between two thieves at His death; and a borrowed grave. Followers of *Him?* And then we say, so readily, we love Him. Love Him? I shrink from saying it of myself.

Natural respectability, natural amiability, natural loveliness, will not do for Christ. So the disciples are astonished out of measure, and ask, "Who then can be saved?" And He Himself answers: "With men it is impossible." Man would never be in heaven by-and-by, nor follow Christ now, if he were left to himself. Here is presented to us the very best sample that could be found of nature. He ran to Him, he kneeled to Him, he called Him "Good Master;" he shewed Him the most perfect respect and appreciation. Surely he was a wonderful specimen of man at his best. But he lacked this "one thing," and his heart was in his possessions and riches.

Now let us turn for a moment to the other scripture that we have read.

Here we find another "One thing;" and this is the bright side of it. Thank God there is a bright side to every picture, as well as a dark one. In this Psalm we find the longing desire of a heart that is set free by having tasted in some measure the blessedness of that spot where Christ is.

It is a great thing if any of us can say we have only *one* desire, *one* wish. You know Jacob had only one wish: that he might see Joseph's face, and then he could die. It is a wonderful thing what the power of only one thing in a person's soul is. It is marvellous what

a path of light it leads the saints along in this world. I see the beauty of this scripture more and more every day.

But there is a kind of desire that never comes to anything: "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." I have known people who had great desires, but who still never came to anything. There was no bottom, as it were, to the soul, no foundation, so to say. There was no saying, I will make this the one simple purpose of my life. I think the reason that we have so little of the Lord is because there is so little purpose to have more. If a man of the world means to have a future here, do you think he dreams his life away? In proportion to the earnestness of his desire to attain his object, is the earnestness of his pursuit of it. Why it is wonderful what a man of the world will do and suffer to attain the object of his heart. And yet the saint who has a far higher object set before him, an object passing anything that the natural mind can conceive, is too often found lazy, idle, purposeless in his soul. "*Seek* the Lord while he may be found," we often say to sinners, but I believe we ought rather to say it to ourselves. I long to have deeper acquaintance with Him; to *seek* Him. As the Psalmist says: "One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after."

Oh, you say, but that is the Old Testament!

Well, do we not get anything like it in the New? In one passage, which does not take us as high as seated in the heavenlies in Christ, it says: "Seek those things which are above." You are brought into a territory that is boundless; now seek out the treasures that are your own there.

But you will make souls legal, if you press this, it is said! I can only reply that I do not believe it. And if you call *that* legality, I must say it would do people great good to have a little of it. I feel that there has been so much of a dreamy kind of speculation in God's things, so much unreality, so much of what one cannot grasp. But when you come to the plain practical thing, to the every-day carrying out of the truth, where is it?

Let us look a little at the details of this Psalm.

Of course it is cast in a Jewish mould, as we find in the words, "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." To "*dwell in the house of the Lord*" is the desire of the soul. Some are quite satisfied with the thought that they shall be in heaven by-and-by. But do I not want to be there *now*? The subjective side, too, is what the apostle prays the Ephesian saints might have: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and here we get the same thing in another way. I want to dwell in the house of God all the days of my

life. I want to dwell there *now*, and to have that as the spot from whence I can come out *now*—that spot on high where I am privileged to dwell with Christ.

And for what is there this desire to dwell there? “*That I may behold the beauty of the Lord.*” Oh how blessed, to desire to be in heaven for the sake of being *with Christ*! People often say, “How I wish I were delivered out of this scene of trial and difficulty, out of this world of sin and sorrow!” But if you were at home up there now, you would be able to go calmly through all the storms here. You will never know how to live on earth until you have been up there to learn how. I go there to *see Him*, to behold His beauty. What a charm it is to get even a little sense of this in our souls! There is such a fearful amount of selfishness in every one of our hearts. We say, “He has paid our debt; He has made our peace with God.” Yes, truly, but that is not all. It is far more than that; it is boundless riches. When the two disciples of John followed him, asking, “Where dwellest thou?” He answered, “Come and see.” There is not a word said as to what it was like. There is no doubt it was a humble spot, but there is not a word said about it one way or the other. It was *Himself*; alone with Him they wanted nothing else. It is wonderful what the company of an intimate friend is amid paths of sorrow;



and that is what we have. We have *His company* as we go through this world. He said, "I will not leave you orphans; *I will come to you.*" I do not believe that is by the Holy Ghost; nor do I believe that it is only on the first day of the week. I believe it is the special manifestation of Himself that He gives to His people. He is *with* them, as in Psalm xxiii. It is His company, His presence; this alone can light up everything. I want to behold His *beauty*. That will be our occupation through all eternity. *How* do you think we shall spend eternity? By being for ever with and beholding the matchless beauty of the Christ. Oh, to begin it now! and thus to find all below distanced to us.

But there is more than this: "And to inquire in his temple." I believe the force of these words is given us in the word *meditation*. One reason why things have such little hold over our hearts is that we meditate on them so little. If there is to be any real appropriation of truth, there must be the sitting down quietly in private, and meditating on it. I am sure that God does meet His people wonderfully in a little passing verse or line of Scripture; but this is not like meditation. Neither will *study* make up for meditation. It is meditation that forms the affections of the heart.

And now look at what follows. In the next verse there is a touch of the most exceeding

blessedness. “For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.” Now tell me anything comparable to this! You desire to dwell in the house of God; trouble comes, and He hides you where you have dwelt! There is not a word about *me*, or what *I* do; but *He* hides me. Where? Where my heart dwelt before!

In some little measure we have witnessed this. We have seen saints going on with God, desiring to learn more of Him, desiring to dwell with Him. Then a stroke of trouble comes, and God hides them, so that they positively pass through, not unfeeling, yet unruffled. There is to be all the spiritual desire to seek, but when trouble comes there is nothing but quiet repose; then God interferes for us. How many have long had this as the comfort of their soul, that, when my heart makes Christ its object, He makes the trials and difficulties of my life His concern. He does not say you shall not have trouble; but He does say, When it comes I will hide you.

Now these are the two things that were in my heart on which to say a word, for I do feel that we need more to be people of one object. There is a simplicity, an evenness, an unhindered moving on, in the person who has one object. Do you think it would unfit you for things here? I do not believe it. On the contrary, I believe it would fit you marvellously to be for Christ in everything; for instead of doing it for yourselves, you would

do it for Christ. I was shocked the other day by hearing it said of a Christian, that he did his business for himself, but his religion had to do with Christ; that he did his business as a man of the world, and his religion as a Christian. But I say there is no Christianity in such a thought or statement as this at all. Once a Christian, always a Christian, and never anything else. Once a follower of Christ, always a follower of Christ, and in everything a follower of Christ.

The Lord, in His grace, give our hearts the simple one desire of the Psalmist: "To dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;" to find a home there of unspeakable blessedness, in glory with Himself, the firstborn amongst many brethren; while, as to earth and all that is below, that may be true of us which is expressed in the lines:

"We are but strangers here, we do not crave  
A home on earth which gave Thee but a grave;  
Thy cross has severed ties which bound us here,  
Thyself our treasure in a brighter sphere."

This is the real truth. Christ our *treasure* in heaven, and only His cross on earth. The more deeply you search into the subject, the more full you will find it in every way. The glory is the place of our treasure, and the cross defines our place on earth. May our hearts be encouraged

to press on; it is only for a little while; the darkest moment is that immediately preceding the dawning of the day. We have through His grace two blessed realities to sustain us here: as a present reality we are the objects of the Father's love in the measure in which it rested on Christ; He Himself is the witness to it: "Hast loved them *as thou hast loved me.*" And then, as to the future, we have the bright and blessed hope of being *perfectly like Him*: "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

(W. T. T.)

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We know very little outward suffering; but "If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him." It is not suffering *for*, but *with*.

(J. N. D.)

## THE FATHER.

MATTHEW XI. 25-27.

I WANT, my friends, to speak to you a few words to-night on the *Father*. Let us look a little into the grounds we have to say that we believe in God the Father.

The supreme Being, whose power has been displayed in creation, and still more in redemption, that *He* is my Father—is it possible? The supreme Being whom we have never seen, is it possible that He stands in that relation to any of us, and that we have the privilege of calling Him *Father*?

We read: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father;" but it does not stop there: "Neither any man the Father save the Son." You observe the distinction between the Father and the Son. But then we read there *is* a revelation of the Father by the Son: "And he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." We are shut up to this: are we willing to have the Father revealed to us by the Son? It is a divine Person—the

Son—who reveals to us another divine Person—the Father.

There is a different way to this in which God is spoken of as Father in the Old Testament. In Exodus iv., the first place where God is spoken of as Father, we see this brought out. The Lord tells Moses there: "Israel is my son, even my first-born." This is the first place in Scripture where we have such a truth in any way mentioned, and here we see that the whole people of Israel could say of Jehovah, We are His son; but no single Israelite could say: Jehovah is my Father.

Again, in Jeremiah xxxi. 9, it is written: "I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born." After all their failure, God does not alter His original purpose about Israel. Though they had been turned out of the land because of their sins, He still says, "I am a Father to Israel." But here again it is the people as a whole who could say, Jehovah is our Father; not individually, He is *my* Father.

And if you turn back to the prophet Isaiah, you find that beautiful passage in chapter lxiii. 16, where the remnant bless God, saying, "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting;" and therefore what He reveals of Himself, expressing

what He is, does not alter. The Father of Israel does not alter whatever the failure of His people may be. When they shall be brought back again into their land, their words will be, "Doubtless thou art our Father."

But there is a great difference in the way in which the Father is spoken of in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old, Jehovah is the Father of Israel. In the New, the Father is one Person in the Godhead; one is the Father; another the Son; and another the Holy Ghost. In Matthew xxviii. we get the Lord's own words telling His disciples to "Go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and then to tell them of *Himself*, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever *I* have commanded you." All the persons of the Godhead are here on an equality. This is the New Testament truth.

It is true that we get the fact that there are Persons in the Godhead in the Old Testament; but these Persons are not expressed by name. A striking passage as to this is in Genesis xix. 24, in connection with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha. Here we have plurality of Persons plainly spoken of, but we have not distinction of the Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that is a New Testament truth. So as the Lord says in the verses we read: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to

whomsoever the Son will reveal him." The first who spoke of the Father as distinct from the Son, is the Son Himself, who thus reveals Him; the Father whom He had seen, but whom those to whom He spoke had not seen, as He tells us in John 6: "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, *he* hath seen the Father," whom *they* could not see. It was an unseen Person He spoke of, but a real Person; and He who spoke was the only One upon earth who had seen Him.

But though the Father has been never seen, He has been *heard*. Three times over in the Gospels the Father's voice has been heard, either speaking to the Son or about the Son.

The first time that the Father's voice was heard was when the Lord Jesus came up out of the water, after He had been baptised by John. Then there was a personal address from the Father to the Son: "A voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." It was a personal address from heaven, an address from the Father to the Son; the Father declaring who this was who had been thus baptised; the virgin's Son, conceived by the Holy Ghost, so that in *that* sense He was the Father's Son, though in another sense He had been His Son from all eternity.

We also get here distinction of the Persons of the Godhead. The Father's voice was heard



from heaven. The Son was there present, the One to whom He spoke. And the Holy Ghost was seen, as far as He could be seen: He descended in a bodily shape like a dove. There was now a Person on earth upon whom the Holy Ghost could descend apart from any sacrifice. There was One now on earth on whom the Holy Ghost could abide; One on whom He could find a resting-place; One who was perfectly holy in His own Person.

The second time that the Father's voice was heard it was not directly addressed to the Son, but to those who were with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is an important truth, that, at the beginning of His ministry, at His baptism, the Father owned Him as His beloved Son; and then, after He had walked about on earth, after He had been opposed, after He had been buffeted by sinners, the Father's voice was heard again saying: My estimation of Him is unchanged; He is still "my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The third time that we hear the Father's voice is in John xii. There we read that, the Lord, speaking of His death, turned to His Father and said: "Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The world did not understand the sound; they did not discern what that voice said; they thought it

thundered. But the evangelist tells us what the voice said: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." He had just shewn forth the glory of His name in resurrection-power, in bringing Lazarus forth from his grave; and He would shortly shew it forth again in raising His beloved Son from the dead.

On these three occasions the Father's voice has been heard on earth, but never has man who has walked on earth seen the Father.

How true were the Lord's words: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him"! The disciples felt it was something new; they felt it was something they had never heard before. It brought to their hearts a sense of relationship to God. Peter and the others could say: To each *one* of us He speaks as if we had a Father in heaven. So they say: "Lord, teach us to pray." Proper prayer to God must be based upon knowledge of God. They had now got the knowledge that not only was God in heaven, but that, as individuals, God was their Father.

From time to time He said to them "*my* Father;" at other times, "*your* Father;" again at others, "*the* Father." But what characterised them was, that there was a *birth* tie consciously formed between them and God. The new revelation that the Son had thus given to them of their relationship, made the forms of prayer they had hitherto

used no longer suitable to them as children, so He gave them what is commonly called "The Lord's prayer;" for God's desire was that every one of His children might know Him and address Him in that confiding way as their *Father*.

As quickened souls, they wanted to know how to address God; so He told them that it was not to be as in old times. Solomon, as a Jew, could speak of Jehovah as dwelling "in the thick darkness;" and added, "I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever;" and could pray Him to "Hear in heaven thy dwelling place, and when thou hearest forgive." But the Lord Himself told the Jews in Matthew that Jehovah had forsaken that house: "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." God could not any more dwell in that house in Jerusalem—that house where the Lord will dwell when ruling over His earthly people of Israel; it was defiled by His people's wickedness. He had dwelt there before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar; His glory had been seen in it then; but, amongst the five things that adorned His holy temple, and were wanting in the days of Ezra, was the Shechinah. It was there no longer, Jehovah did not *dwell* in that temple though He still owned it as His house. So the Lord says to them, "Your house is *left* desolate:" not *made* desolate, but left so as it had been, because they rejected Him. The

Shechinah, the cloud of glory, was seen on the Mount, over Him, the only spot where it did then shew itself.

The forms of prayer, then, which had been used till the Lord began His ministry, did not now suit the disciples. The Lord therefore taught them to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

But it was one thing to say "Our Father" thus, and another thing to say "Abba, Father" after the Holy Ghost came down to earth. It is because He has come to take up His abode in the hearts of the saints of God, that we are privileged to take up that word, and, in the full confidence of our hearts, to say "Abba, Father." This word in all its full import the saints could not use until the Holy Ghost had come.

In the eighth of John the Jews ask the Lord, "Where is thy Father?" Mark, not *our* Father, nor *the* Father. But it was of "*the* Father" that He spoke to them. The "Jews" are always the worst people in John's Gospel. They did not believe what the Lord had said, and challenged Him to shew them *the* Father. We can understand the bearing of His answer now. "Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

But the Father and the Son are quite distinct Persons. What then does the Lord mean by

this answer? The answer that He gives to a similar question in John xiv. answers this one too. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." He is the way to the Father. And mark, it does not say *my* Father, but *the* Father. And He adds: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him."

Thus we learn from this, my friends, that if we have not seen the Father, it is because we have not seen the Son who reveals Him. The Father is not to be to us as an unknown Person. We shall see Him some day. I do not understand the thought of being in my Father's house and not seeing my Father. I shall see Him some day, but not upon earth. But even now I know His actions, His ways, His heart. I trace Him in the Lord Jesus Christ. We see what the Lord Jesus Christ was, what was the desire of His heart; but we learn in all His ways, His works, His words, another Person too, and that Person is the *Father*.

Who is competent to speak to us of the Father but the Son? Who knows the Son but the Father, and who knows the Father but the Son? It is perfectly simple, a child can understand it. In all the Son's ways on earth, the Father is revealed to us; so that these words in Matthew

are true for us. Though we can say we have not *seen* Him, yet He is not to be a stranger to us, for in all the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ we learn to know Him, as the Son has taught us. I cannot shew you the Father, but I can shew you the *ways* of the Father. If you want to know what the Father is towards those who have sinned against Him, debtors to His grace and His mercy; if you want to know what the heart of the Father is towards His saints, His redeemed people, turn to the four Gospels and see. Though I have not seen Him, yet I may say I *know Him*. As the Lord says: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the Father as quite distinct from Himself; yet there is the most perfect communion between them. The Son's thoughts are all the Father's, and the Father's are all the Son's. So that we learn in the life of the Lord Jesus here on earth, how near the Father came to us in the Person of His Son. We have to say, He is not an unknown Person to me. His shape I have never seen, His voice I have never heard; yet I may say, I have known the Father; I have known Him in the revelation that He has made to me in the Son.

Just for a moment I turn to John 6. Here we get the contrast that there is between the manna in the wilderness, and the bread of God which came down from heaven. The Lord here makes

the Father known to the people as the giver of what the soul needs. The bread from heaven is not only given for the sustainment of the saint, but there is also a positive thing for each soul to appropriate individually. It is: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." "And the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." There must be the eating and drinking, the individual appropriation, or there is no life in the soul. Thus the Father is the giver of that bread from heaven, without which we can have no life; and also that bread which cheers and sustains the heart of the saint as he journeys on through the wilderness. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

And who gives this bread? It is the Father who comes out as the giver; as James says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Do you ask, Whence do we get it? The answer is, My Father gives it you. He is a giver to those who were lost, who were dead in their sins; He gives them "the bread from heaven which giveth life unto the world." But not only does He give

life, but He sustains right on to the end the life which He gives.

And now let us turn back to John iv., where we get the Father in a beautiful character: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him." The Lord Jesus tells the woman, "Ye worship ye know not what," because false worship is the worship of demons. In the Lord's day, at the time when He was upon earth, the only place in which God sanctioned worship was Jerusalem. As for the Samaritans, they were worshipping demons; they thought they were worshipping God, but the Lord says, "Ye worship ye know not what."

But the Father is *seeking worshippers*. What a beautiful display is this of the Father! To sinners He gives life; to saints He gives sustenance; and from His people's hearts He seeks worship!

My friends, are we responding to this? It is not here a soul bowed down under the sense of the Father's goodness seeking to pour itself out in worship to that Father. It is *He* who is seeking the worshippers! He delights to see the homage, the adoration, the praise of worship, rise out of the hearts of His children. True worship is based upon this; the soul knowing its relation to God, and approaching Him as Father. Is this



how we worship—in the full consciousness of the birth tie? “The Father *seeketh* worshippers.” This is what He desires. “Worshippers in spirit and in truth.” Or as we read elsewhere, worship by *the Holy Ghost*, for it is the Holy Ghost who leads saints forth in worship; whilst the work of Christ on the cross is the ground on which we stand before God; the ground on which we come to Him in all the confidence of a child as it approaches its earthly father. It is that simple but expressive cry of *Father*. Are we half alive to this wondrous grace? Are we half alive to what is in the Father’s heart? To this love which comes out in John vi. as a giver, and in John iv. as seeking worshippers.

Then again in John x. we read: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” That clause, “They shall never perish” means that there shall be no root or thing in them that can engender perishing. There is no root within because of which they can perish; and no power from without can pluck them out of His Father’s hand.

It is the character of giver that comes out here too: “My Father, *gave* them me.” And then the

abiding security of the sheep. Who can pluck them out of the Son's hand? Who can pluck them out of the Father's? We see here the power that is exercised toward them?

And what is it makes the sheep of such interest to the Father? It is because they believed on the Son. But there is another reason, namely, they are precious to the Son. We read in John vi. "All that the Father *giveth* me shall come to me." "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath *given* me I should lose nothing." The sheep are the Father's gift to the Son. Before ever the Son had them, they were the Father's; and therefore they are precious to the Son. They are precious to the Father, because they have believed on the Son; and to the Son because they are the gift of the Father.

Then in chapter xvii. we get the desires of the Lord about them. He says, "Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me." "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." As the Father's gift, they are most precious to Him, and therefore He puts them back into the Father's hand to keep while He is absent from them.

And then one more thing comes out in the end of this chapter. If we learn that there is distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,

and if we know the thoughts for us that are in the heart of the Father, as we see Him displayed in the Son, there is one other thing which the Son wishes us to enter into, and that is the enjoyment of the Father's *love*. He says, "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."

There *is* parental love. It would be a strange thing for the father not to wish his son to enjoy his love. There was one, the Son, who passed through this scene, enjoying His Father's love as He walked about on earth; and He wants each one of us who can say, "Abba Father," to enjoy also that love. So He declares the Father's name; He gives His people to know the birth tie between the Father and themselves.

(C. E. S.)

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You never surrender anything to God that He does not take it: He is glad to accept every true offering.

(J. B. S.)

## FRAGMENT.

WHAT a thing for us to find in any measure that the portion of Christ is our portion too at the world's hands: "It knew him not," and so it knows us not in proportion as we are simply children of God. And we know not the world; we know that it exists, but it is nothing to us. It exists not to *us*, save in so far as we are inconsistent, allowing lust to come in.

And the day is coming when we shall be like Him. With all the schooling of God on us, with all the self-judgment that there is within, with all the true-hearted prayer that the saint pours out for himself and for God's people, yet how often comes forth from the same heart the groan, "How little attainment! How little power!"

Never mind; go on climbing. We *shall* be like Him. The day is coming when we shall have no taste for anything that He has not a taste for; when we shall have no mind for anything save that for which He has a mind. *Like Christ!* Clothed with immortality and glory. And not only like Him outside even, in that scene where all can shine out without disturb-

ance, but like Him, *all within*. Everything in harmony with Christ!

What a word to have in my heart! I shall be like Christ! His name on my forehead; I, stamped with His image, for I shall see Him as He is. Now we see in a glass darkly, but even now in the measure in which we see Him, we are moulded into His likeness. Then it will be eye to eye!

So we go onward still. Onward in darkness? Oh no! onward still in light, because it is *onward to Christ*. While the heart is occupied with Him each step leads one nearer to Him. Every thing and spot that is unlike Christ becomes odious to the heart that is occupied with Him; and thus he purifies himself even as He is pure.

It becomes us in such days as these to look to it that we have the mark of God's children on us both as answering to the heart of God, and also for the joy and comfort of our own souls.

(G. V. W.)

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## ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

1 KINGS XIX. AND 2 KINGS II., AND IV. 38-40.

It is scarcely to be expected that a casual reader of this scripture will be able to seize at once either its diameter or character, for the grand occasion which sheds light and glory upon its entire circle is, that Elijah and Elisha, who were previously together, have just parted company—one for the heavens, and the other for this earth. The chariot and horses of fire, and the whirlwind, have carried off the prophet Elijah, by way of Bethel, and Jericho, and the river of Jordan. Nor would Elisha “*tarry*” at either of these places, important as they were in the ways of God, but said, “As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave *thee*; and they two *went on*.” He was instructed by these stepping-stones of an earlier faith and experience at Bethel, where God wrote upon Jacob the covenant name of Israel; and at Jordan, where “the ark of the testimony stood firm,” when the tumultuous waters of death retreated in a heap, till the

twelve tribes had safely crossed to the other side, under the leadership of Joshua. He was taught at Jericho that its walls had given way before the priests and the rams' horns—yea, had fallen down flat before the shoutings of the people, and he was thus prepared for any greater wonder from a wonder-working God.

“And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said to him, Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace.” The master and the scholar were in this way strengthening each other in the secret things of God, and could not abide the intrusion of lookers-on, as such. And now that these early lessons were concluded, Elijah says, “What shall I do *for thee* before I be taken from thee?” And Elisha said, “I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me.” Elijah had failed, through fear of Jezebel and Ahab, in *his* service, and of what avail could it be for his successor to require anything less than “a double portion of thy spirit,” for greater exploits, or for prolonged endurance? And Elijah said, “Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.” The departure of Elijah by ascension into heaven, yet in connection with all these mystic associations in the *earthly* places, was

witnessed by Elisha, who cried, "My father, my father! the horsemen of Israel, and the chariot thereof. And he saw him no more."

The subsequent action of Elisha is as significant, and as much in keeping, on his part, with his anointing at Abel-meholah, as when "Elijah passed by, and cast *his* mantle upon him." What could Elisha do afterwards, when he had received the mantle that fell from the ascended prophet, but refuse everything that was unlike it? so Elisha "took hold of his *own* clothes, and rent them in two pieces." He had learnt that separation to God as the son of Shaphat, and from his father's house, was necessary for association in this new testimony with Elijah; and he perfects himself in this "school of the prophets," by refusing to own himself as according to the flesh, or belonging to things as they were around him, and he casts off his former raiment.

It was a great moment for faith in Israel too, for Elisha was come back with a double portion of his master's spirit, to complete, by a ministry of grace in the power of life, what Elijah had begun in righteousness against idolatry.

Identified with all that Elijah had been, and associated with new supplies from the heavens to which the master had ascended, Elisha returns to the land in a time of dearth, and into the midst of Israel in its apostasy and ruin. He is the witness of resources which come from above,



where Elijah has departed, and takes his place more as "endued with power from on high," though not exactly resurrection-power, for Elijah had not ascended out of death.

It is in this might and power, and in connection with these "upper springs," in their fulness of grace, that Elisha can face any emergency, or prove himself above every difficulty, through the sufficiency of God. What more fitting, as a proof, than that the former condition and state of Jericho, the cursed city, should be not only reversed, but a new one introduced, by the hidden virtues of the new cruse and the salt therein. In the efficacious power of these, "the man of God" for the day went forth unto the spring of waters, and cast the salt in there, with a "Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day."

By this precious and anticipative ministry it is that Elisha brings the circumstances into keeping with the situation of the city, and its pleasantness (even as creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption), and banishes death and barrenness from the land of Israel, and of Immanuel, by the healing power from above, which flows down from the other side of death and judgment, in the life and liberty and beauty of the glorified Son of man in resurrec-

tion. Barrenness and death, which were two of the penalties inflicted originally upon creation and the creature by the Creator, are thus met, and finally superseded in type, by the circuit of Elijah and Elisha, on that eventful last day of their communion together, as they trod in the footsteps of the Holy One, with the patriarchs and Israel aforetime. God sealed these mysteries and their application by the chariot of fire and the horses of fire, in which Elijah became united with the heavens as the ascended or departed one; and Elisha as qualified and suited for his ministry below, by the double portion of the spirit, and the mantle which fell from Elijah as he went up.

In chapter iv., this "man of God" upon the earth is equally grand in the use of means that are ever so little, so that the pot of oil in the widow's house is as marvellous as had been the new cruse and the salt upon the matter of the barren land, and death, and the curse on Jericho. Nor is the faith of this woman a whit behind the grace and power by which Elisha reverses the occasion of the widow's cry in her distress, and makes it his opportunity for filling every vessel to the brim which she had borrowed from her neighbours, so that her cup ran over, and a plentiful overflow was made, by which she and her sons were to "live on the rest" in peace and assurance.

Indeed all this, and more besides, is but as the light of the morning of that millennial day which is to usher in "the Sun of righteousness that shall arise with healing in his wings (unto you that fear my name), and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall." A morning "without clouds," fresh, and full from the coming forth of the true Bridegroom and that great Prophet, the Messiah of Israel, at the promised thousand years of blessing. That true Servant and Son, who has ascended into the heavens, and has been declared by God to be both "Lord and Christ," will in that day pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days [a double portion] of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy." We may well ask, what could all this millennial scene be, including the kingdom and the power of the Son of man, in the immensity of its forthcoming glory with Christ and His redeemed people? and where laid up, or prefigured, for "the faith of God's elect" in Israel, but in the fact of the ascended Elijah, united to the heavens with Moses, till they should come forth from thence to meet Him in the day of Christ's glorious trans-

figuration upon Mount Tabor? The mantle which fell from the departed one upon the anointed Elisha still connected these two prophets, and was a link in carrying on the Lord's work till He come, so that Jesus identified Elias with John the Baptist, saying, "If ye can receive it, this is Elias which was for to come." But the time was *not yet* for a nation to be born in a day.

We pass on to the example, in chapter iv., of the power from on high, brought back from where Elijah is in heaven, and applied by Elisha to the condition and circumstances below, as witnessed in the miracle of the great pot, and the cry of death which the sons of the prophets uttered. "And so Elisha came again to Gilgal; and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for *they* knew them not." Elisha had made the secret meaning of Jordan his own, and was now as truly the exponent of its power, as when his master had crossed it just before; for "*he* took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah. And when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and

thither : and Elisha went over." And now that Elisha is come again to Gilgal, will he read its significance as expressing the energy of God's Spirit, on behalf of those who "could not eat thereof," and act as successfully for the glory of God, and the blessing of those around him, by bringing life out of death, so that there should be no harm in the pot ?

It would seem, as coming after Jordan and Gilgal, that the remedies and resources which they respectively pre-figure, connected with death and resurrection in Christ, and the accompanying power of the Holy Ghost, sent down from the Father and the Son, do but cast their shadows before them ; and enable Elisha to face the wild vine of the earth and its wilder gourds, shred into the great pot, in a time of dearth, and moral alienation from the rights of God. He may aforetime, and did, put Moses into the ways of His steps, and hide him in a cleft of the rock, while His glory passed by—or, He may afterwards instruct Elijah by other footprints, such as the strong wind, and the earthquake, and by the fire, when in the cave at Horeb, the mount of God—or He may, as in the case of Elisha, go yet further, and teach him by the manifested virtues of the meal, which the man of God cast into the great pot, so that he could say, "Pour out for the people that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot."

"The Son of man which is in heaven" said, when upon the earth, and in the midst of this world field, where the wild vine, and "the boar of the wood," and the wild gourds had found a dwelling-place: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Another prophet had cried in the midst of the earth and of a rebellious people, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction;" and when this prophecy had become matter of fact, by the death and resurrection of Christ into heaven itself, the Holy Ghost came down to bear witness by a newly anointed apostle, of the grand reality that "there was no harm" in the pot. "Therefore let no man glory in men;" he says, "for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or *death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

When sin, and death, and the judgment, and the curse on the pleasant land, are looked at in the light of the fall of Adam, there can be nothing produced or gathered out of the field, but wild gourds from the wild vine, "a lap full." How true it is that those who gathered them "knew them *not*," as to their nature or quality of alienation from God. When cast into the great pot of pottage, none could drink thereof, and there rose up the bitter cry, "O thou man of

God, there is death in the pot." Relief must come in from the meal in the hand of Elisha, or not at all. And so it did, whether in the prophet's day, or much more *now* that the ascended Lord, and Head of His body the church, is seated at the right hand of God, and that the Spirit is sent down as the seal, and witness, and earnest, of our place and portion as children of the Father, yea, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," in another creation.

The Levitical type of the offering of "fine flour," by Moses and Aaron's sons, as given forth in Leviticus ii. to the children of Israel, may rightly connect itself with "the meal" in the hand of Elisha, "the man of God," when at Gilgal, on the other side of Jordan. "And when any will offer a meat-offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall put oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon. And he shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests; (for so the law ran in sanctuary times) and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made *by fire*, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." Precious it is to learn, as worshippers in the tabernacle, the perfectness of Jesus in His human nature, as the fine flour, with the oil, and the frankincense, in contrast with the wild gourds of the field,

gathered from off the wild vine. Precious too, under a later ministry, when Elisha cast the meal into the pot of pottage, and healed it for the sons of the prophets. Still more precious is it for believers in Christ, as anointed priests to be instructed, that "The remnant of the meat-offering shall be Aaron's and his sons' ; it is a thing most holy of the offerings of the Lord, made by fire."

The "fine flour" of the sanctuary belongs to us for communion and worship, in all that suits the holiest, where God dwells—as does also "the meal" in the hand of the man of God upon the earth, in the midst of death in the pot, and because of the wild gourds, and the dearth in the land. For what is this act of the prophet in substance, but this : that "God hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And there was no harm in the pot. If Elisha held the secret power from heaven by which death was thus overcome, as well as dearth and barrenness in the land, in the days of his ministry, what shall be said of the grander victory of Him, who was far greater than Elijah and Elisha, and who descended into death and the grave, "that he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil ; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" ? The death of Christ is victory and glory.



Elisha's twofold or double ministry made him more than equal to the dire necessities of the great pot in his day, and all was turned round for blessing, as a type or figure of the work which God gave to His Son to accomplish; so that He could look up to heaven in the hour of *His* departure and say: "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jesus wrought by the penalties of death and judgment, which God inflicted upon the wild men of the field, to put away the sins and iniquities upon which these penalties had fallen, and to reconcile them to God, by redemption through His precious blood. The wild gourd is no more: for "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit."

The lesson given out to us *now* by the wondrous mission of the Holy Ghost, come down from the Father and the Son, is to glorify Christ, and bear witness to the "great High Priest passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He is also to take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us, till we are caught up, and have put off the image of the earthy man, and have put on the image of the heavenly man. And what are these perfections of the Holy Ghost's mission, but the full embodiment of the two prophets, in all that their varied ministries typified? The wild gourd is gone by the sacrifice of Christ, and there is no more death in the pot.

And they were parted asunder, by the chariot and horses of fire, by which Elijah was carried up into the heavens, and Elisha left alone below, in possession of the "hard thing," or the double portion of his master's spirit, and the mantle which descended upon him for his own pathway down to death, and the sepulchre.

Indeed the characteristics of these two symbolical prophets, and their contrasts in the chariot, and the sepulchre, as prefiguring what "the truth is in Jesus," embrace the whirlwind by which life in heaven was reached by Elijah, on the one side ; and on the other side, by the as wonderful sepulchre of Elisha, in which God sealed the great fact, of life out of death, which are the constituent parts of our blessed Lord's victory in the heavens, and His triumph in the lowest part of the earth. "And Elisha died, and they buried him." (See 2 Kings xiii. 20, 21.) "And it came to pass as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men ; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha ; and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived and stood upon his feet." The translated man in the heavens is displayed by Elijah, in witness of righteous service, on the one hand ; and life out of death is reached upon the earth, by the patient endurance of Elisha on the other hand, as sealed and witnessed in the man who "revived, and stood upon his feet."

These lesser intimations are perfect in their season, through the oblation of fine flour and frankincense to us, as priests of the Sanctuary; or, as "the meal" on the other side of Jordan, in the energy of the Spirit at Gilgal; or afterwards, when at Jerusalem, "the risen Lord Himself stood in the midst of His own disciples, and said, "Peace be unto you." But more than this, which of us does not rejoice to see the way by which God makes us know, that He has got glory to Himself, through Christ, over and above the malice of Satan, and the wild vine and its gourds, and the penalties of death and judgment—yea, the curse which He inflicted on the very ground? It is God who loves to tell us, that through the Son of man in the glory with the Father, all things shall be reconciled to Himself, whether in heaven or earth. The sting of death, and the strength of the law, or the wild herbs, are gone, and "there is no harm in the pot." And all the promises of God are made yea and amen to us, in Christ, for glory can come out.

On His way up, Jesus reprov'd His disciples because they were terrified and affrighted at Himself, and at the virtue of His precious blood, as well as the fruits and effects of the healing power, that had gone out of Him, till He said, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see." "And he led

them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Precious grace, He has made us "His own" for ever! The cry had ever been, "O thou man of God there is death in the pot," and rightly too. But now that we are one with Christ by grace and redemption where Christ is, and sealed by the Holy Ghost for the eternal glory, the word and ministry by the Spirit is, "Pour out for the people, that they may eat." We have crossed the Red Sea, and sung the song of deliverance; yea, we have followed the Ark itself over Jordan, and at Gilgal it is, that God has rolled away "the reproach of Egypt" from His people for ever. Instead of the cry, "O thou man of God, there is death in the pot," our joy is, "There is no harm;" for death, or the rapture, prefigured in Elijah and Elisha, is indispensable on *our* way to the glory, where God dwells. No death, no resurrection for Christ, in glory; no resurrection from the grave, there can be no victory, over the whole power of the enemy, No death, and there can be no expiation for sin, and transgression.

Nor is it merely that by means of death, the righteous sufferer for sin found a new path for Himself by resurrection, to "the right hand of the Majesty on high," where *He* has been crowned with glory and honour, and all

things put under His feet; but the very nature of God, in all that "*He is*," has been fully met, and brought out into manifestation, "To the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The oblation of fine flour, with the frankincense, and oil, for the Sanctuary; or "the meal" on the other side of Jordan, at Gilgal; or, death and life as looked at, and learned in Christ where He is, in contrast with Adam and the fall, is the great secret, or key to the Elijah and Elisha ministries in these chapters, and what they prefigure; and enable us to understand the riddle of "*there is death in the pot*," and on the other hand, "*there was no harm in the pot*." Death, as known by us in Christ, is victory, and led to resurrection, and resurrection to ascension, and ascension to glory everlasting, at the right hand of the Father; "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ."

Accomplished redemption, by death on the cross, and the resurrection of Christ in life, by the glory of the Father, gives occasion to God also for that wonderful outburst, and challenge from the place where the Son of man is exalted:

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” In the growing consciousness that there is “no harm in the pot,” we reply, exultingly: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

And Elisha said, “Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.”

These similitudes and contrasts between Elijah and Elisha must now give place to the Person and the ministry of the Word made flesh, who steps into His own circle, and is beyond all comparison as “the Alpha and the Omega,” who brought life and light down into the midst of death and ruin and darkness. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

The handful of fine flour, in the Sanctuary, as the meat offering, or the manna for the wilderness journey laid up in the golden pot, or the meal, in its healing power, on the other side of Jordan, or “the corn of wheat” that must “fall into the ground and die,” or Christ gone up to

God, as the first fruits and wave-sheaf from the harvest field, in resurrection—are each and all, like the covenant bow in the cloud, upon which the eye of God rests, as the token and seal of abiding purpose and unconditional blessing. It is there our eyes meet His, on the other side of death, and judgment, and sin; to find life and glory in the ascended Lord and Head of the Church, “the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” How delighted He was too, when in the midst of men, to bid them “Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you, for him hath God the Father sealed,” adding: “For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth life* unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”

“This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may *eat* thereof, and *not die*. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live *for ever*. These things said Jesus in the synagogue as he taught in Capernaum;” announcing

that it is "The Spirit that quickeneth; *the flesh* profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit, and they are *life*." "There was no death in the pot," for even the water will yet be turned into wine, and the best kept to the last, as at the marriage in Cana, when they drew out, and bare to the governor of the feast.

J. E. B.

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There is no true holiness without peace. I do not say there is no holy nature, but certainly there are no holy affections.

(J. N. D.)



## TO MEET THE BRIDEGROOM.

MATTHEW XXV.

THERE is an important statement in Revelation xxii. 17: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is connected with the whole book of Revelation, which was given to John when everything was ready for Him to come. The Holy Ghost, sent down to testify of Christ on earth, at a certain moment invites Him to come. True, things have developed since that time, but here it is stated that the Spirit and the bride, in company with Him, invite the Lord to come. He is the Bright and Morning Star. The answer to that is, Come! John speaks of "the kingdom and *patience* of Jesus Christ." The Lord is enduring the whole state of things here, and His saints are spoken of as having "kept the word of *my patience*." Again, "The long-suffering of our Lord is salvation;" He waits in patience.

There are two things I wish to consider: first, what the Lord's return is to Himself; and, secondly, what it is to us.

The church has lapsed from this hope, because the *servant* said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth his coming." He did not preach it, he said it in his heart. The ten virgins went forth rightly, but they stopped on the road; the Bridegroom did tarry, and they all slumbered and slept. Inactivity ensues. This was always the case when the church had lost a true sense of the coming of the Lord.

It is the principal charge against the church of Ephesus. They had lost their first love, were asleep, had dropped down into inactivity. "I sleep, but my heart waketh." They had love, but not that first love which is characterised by the Object that commands my attention wherever I am—at my work, in my family. "Forget thine own people, and thy father's house, so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty." You preferred me to your own: that is first love. Not what He can do for me, but what He is to me. It is personal affection for the blessed Lord; it is saying to the Lord, like Ruth to Naomi, "Entreat me not to leave thee."

In John xiii. He Himself makes provision for unbroken intimacy between us and Him; if subject to Him, He will never allow a break. He will take care that there is no interruption between my heart and Him while I am down here.

Now the cry comes: "Behold the Bride-

groom!" This woke them up. "Go ye out to the meeting."

The cry began about fifty or sixty years ago. It caused great alarm at first, because of the sense of the reality of having to meet the Lord. I do not want now to speak of fear, but to cultivate the delight of seeing Him, so that one would shape oneself to it, as a wife, expecting her husband's return, seeks to have everything in order for him—everything as he would like it—is not afraid of his reproach.

Some speak of the Lord's coming because everything here is in confusion, and say He will settle it. But I want to settle myself first, to be divested of everything that is unsuited to Him *before* He comes. The apostle says, "That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." I covet to be a servant like that. He says, "I am jealous over you . . . because I have espoused you to one husband." How his one thought is to have them for the Lord's own eye.

The coming of the Lord is connected with the fact that He is rejected from this world. "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The more simply I own that blessed One who was refused a place here, the less can I belong to the place where He is refused. I cannot get my rights: nothing can be set right till He, whose right it is, is come—until His foes are made His footstool. Nothing

can be complete till He comes. He is rejected, waiting, expecting. I pray that I may enter ~~into~~ His own feelings in coming back. I believe, if I were more in His confidence, He ~~would~~ tell me what He feels about being refused His rights here, and how He looks for the day when He will come. "Henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting ~~at~~ the right hand of power, and coming in ~~the~~ clouds of heaven."

2 Peter i. 19 gives us what His coming is to ourselves; it is the dawn of day to us; it is the day star in our hearts. But we want to be more like friends to the Lord—to know His feelings, like the heavenly company in the Revelation, who give thanks because He has taken to Himself His great power, and has reigned. Here it is the day-dawn, but, before the day, the Star arises in our hearts, the Morning Star in Revelation, "the bright and Morning Star," the prelude of the day. I can remember, in old coaching times, the long dark nights, and the effect upon us all when some one would sing out, "The morning star," the prelude to the day. It is the actual prospect of the Lord's coming before the day comes, the harbinger of the day in our hearts.

Nothing has done more harm than the way in which people talk of the Lord's coming, without seeking to put everything straight in themselves. This has led to the infidelity about it: "Where is the promise of his coming?"

Peter puts it very solemnly: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." All here is going to be burnt up; everything here must go. This has a wonderful moral effect.

Not only am I looking for that bright moment when I shall see the Lord, but also I know that all here is to be dissolved; I am practically set free from all that would detain me. There is not a word about the millennium here; it is skipped over. I am to be connected with the Lord; and what manner of person am I to be? Like a balloon, which not only requires gas to carry it up, but also all the cords and grappling irons must be loosened, to free it from the earth. Monks are like those who try to loosen the cords, but it will not go up without the gas. Peter gives the day-star in our hearts, but he says, Remember everything here has to go—the grappling-irons, &c.—all will be burnt up.

1 Peter i. 13 speaks of the coming of the Lord as it affects the flock: "Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation [or apocalypse] of Jesus Christ."

One thing I desire to cultivate in the heart: What it is to see Him! "For the Lord himself

shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." All heaven is for it! He descends from heaven with a gathering shout—a voice; the angelic host supporting; the trump of God announcing the amazing fact that He is returning. The dead in Christ rise first. Every believer—not the church only, but every believer—every one caught up in that momentous rapture!

In Ephesians we do not get the coming of the Lord at all; there Christ is *in the heart*. But the more we know what that is, the more we long to see Him—the One who has done everything for us, who is gone back to heaven to make a place for us, who is cheering our hearts along the road with His own company. And the greater the correspondence between your soul and Him, the more you want to see Him; the greater the communication, the greater the longing, as we all know with absent friends:

“The draught which lulls our thirst,  
But wakes our thirst anew.”

The Lord tells His disciples, In that day you shall know what union is. If my heart is true

to Him, my heart would break if I lost Him. This is Canticles v. 6-8, or like Mary Magdalene : "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Disciples cannot comfort her, angels cannot pacify her, till she sees Him. He says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." The whole thing dawns upon her. She is quite changed. She finds out that she is associated with Him. He was everything to her ; the world was intolerable without Him ; but the sense of union with Him alters ~~everything~~ : "Ye in me."

It does not come out fully till the Epistle to the Ephesians, because Paul gives the counsel, John the nature. Sit down for half an hour, and tell me if your soul has got hold of that ? There is very little to see, but a great deal to get into. Very little is told to Mary Magdalene, but she went off quite tranquillised. A little bit of divine light had shined into her heart, and now she can bear to be absent from Him, because she knows how she stands in relation to Him.

Paul says, I long to depart. Paul has been eighteen hundred years with the Lord ; it is the next best thing to seeing Him. I desire that we should cultivate affection, and what satisfies affection ; and if you do not know your relationship to Him, you cannot have any activity of affection. Paul has not yet seen Him as He is.

“Christ the firstfruits, then they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

Nothing is finished or complete till He comes. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” These are the advantages. It suits the heart that nothing should be perfect till He comes.

Our politics, all that concern us, belong to that country *from whence* we look for the Saviour. The Jews looked for Messiah, but it is a Saviour for whom I look—One I expect great benefits from. I look for the One from whom I have already received incalculable benefits. What more, then? Much more. He is going to change this vile body, and make it like unto His own glorious body, “according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

When He comes, the first wave of His power will traverse the whole earth, to call up the dead, from Adam onward, first. Then the living saints will be caught up. His first act is to liberate all His own. Like a mighty victor entering a besieged city, His first act is to let out all His own family. All will spring up in glorious bodies, like His own.

If I turn to James, he looks at it as relief from



the pressure of this world, "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receiveth the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Again, in 1 John iii.: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Those who are now sons of God are expecting to be like Him when they see Him. Therefore he that hath this hope in Him is chaste now, separate from the world now; he seeks to be fit for Him. John looks to be ready for Him; he says, I drop this: it will not suit Him. The bride going to see Him must have everything suitable to Him. She says: He is coming home to-day; everything must be ready for Him as He would like it; there must be the loins girt, the first love, the first works. There must be watching; that is the character of first love—not asleep. He "commanded the porter to watch." The watcher does not go to bed; he is watching all night; he is expecting Him to come. This is the real desire of the heart. It is the place of the servant.

Again in chapter ii.: "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." He exhorts them in order that he that is the servant may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. It is not the people there; it is the servants. Oh to be servants like that! seeking to do the work well, that we may not lose the full reward; that we may not be ashamed of our work; that we may be able to count on a full reward! Paul says, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

Now I want you to carry away an impression of the immense blessedness of seeing the Lord. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." If your hearts are right—your lamps trimmed—I am not afraid but your feet will be right. Practically it is the King's daughter, all glorious within. "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework," everything done stitch by stitch.

The one thing to cultivate is the desire to see Him as He is. And where is my heart, if practically sensible of being united to Him, and enjoying every expression of His love and interest in me down here, if I am not longing more and more to see His face? He counts on our love. He says, "I am the bright and

morning Star." He counts on being that to our hearts.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." Then comes activity. I turn round to him that hears and say: You are not saying come; say, come. I cannot be isolated at such a moment. If I see a brother or a sister not saying come, I turn to him and say, I wish you to say come. "And let him that is athirst (the anxious one) come." Then my desires reach out to every one, I become widely evangelical. If you have not found out the streams that make glad the city of my God, come and drink of the water of life freely. The whole earth is swept while I am looking after everything that belongs to Christ, because I want to have everything ready for Him when He comes.

And now, how do you gain affection? By being occupied with what Christ is to you, by learning His interest in you. A parent does not ask his child to love him, but he gains the love by the way he seeks the child's welfare. The Lord seeks my true interest; He thinks of me; He serves me. He is reserved to me if I walk unworthily of Him. His love desires my perfection. Abraham going up mount Moriah learns Jehovah-Jireh. You cannot speechify about affection, or argue a man into it, but you can promote in your soul a deeper acquaintance with Christ's interests in you, and your heart will get more

enlarged in the knowledge of His love. It is thus we become devoted to Him, so that we look for Him, longing for that day when we shall see His blessed face.

“ Thus the wish grows deeper, stronger,  
Friend of friends, Thy face to see.”

(J. B. S.)

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It is sweet to serve Him ; sweet to let the light of His eye be one's guidance ; to do nothing until He speaks ; and, when He speaks, to do what He bids, and then again rest.

(G. V. W.)

## THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

JOHN VII. 1-44.

YOU see the utter darkness in which the Pharisees and all of them were; they said, "He deceiveth the people." The effect of the presence of Christ is always to produce darkness where faith is not. The Lord had wrought miracles and so on, but the natural heart never can perceive the light, so there is nothing but confusion. There is always positive wilful rejection by the natural man, as there was by the Pharisees; but where Christ is known, there all is light. There is a great deal for us to learn of course, but it is God's light that we have, and in that light we shall see light. We go on learning truth about God, truth about the world, truth about the vanity that deceives men's hearts: but grace through the gospel and the testimony is there, speaking of Christ is there, and, thank God, all in perfect grace. There is the manifestation of what we were: "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." So that

though there is much to learn, still I have got now what reveals God's heart and discerns mine. The Son came to reveal the Father. It does not say grace and truth were *revealed*: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ."

As we see here, it is a rejected Christ. It is always, "Take up thy *cross* and follow me." All the glory becomes a cross in this world. In His humiliation the glory was there: His disciples "beheld his glory," but still it was rejected; there was always the enmity of man against it. So it is written, "Marvel not if the world hate you." And He said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." We take up our cross and follow Him. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it *die*, it bringeth forth much fruit." So, the Lord says, if you go with me you must go that road. It was "If it die." He stopped alone till then; nobody touched Him. His proper work in this world was only at the cross. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Born of God was another thing, and *they* received Him. But by the world He was rejected. Thus we see our place, the Christian's place, is this: He having been rejected, we have the counter-part of it.

But not only is He the rejected One; He is

also the glorified Man in glory. There is one Man where I get life ; one Man in whom righteousness is displayed ; and that is Christ at the right hand of God. There our hearts must go up and find the only thing to which we belong ; though of course our bodies belong to this world. Man took his place in the glory of God consequent on redemption being wrought, and the Holy Ghost was sent down and our bodies become the temples of God. That which characterises the Christian is that the Holy Ghost dwells in him. It is this which the Lord speaks of in the passage we have read—the outflowing of it.

There were three great feasts among the Jews, three very important ones to which all the males had to go up, all gathering round God. The passover, to which they all went, though it had not so much the character of rejoicing, and the feast of weeks, and the feast of ingathering. The passover had not so much the character of rejoicing ; it was rather God in His character of Judge passing over them. So the unleavened bread that followed the passover was called the “ bread of affliction.” God is the God of holiness, so He must have holiness. So after the passover each person went to his own tent ; there was no rejoicing or anything of that sort.

But in the other two feasts they were to go with an offering in their hands, and to rejoice

before the Lord with their sons and their daughters, their man-servants and their maid-servants, the Levites, the strangers, the fatherless and the widows. They were to rejoice in their feast and all others with them.

And in this feast which we have in John, when the harvest was over, when the discriminating judgment of God had taken place, they were to dwell in tents, and with the fatherless and the widows they were to rejoice. They were in rest.

The first, the passover, was just escaping out of judgment; the next is the enjoyment of the firstfruits; and then the getting into the rest of God, the full thing; God had blessed them in *everything*. That is the one that we get here. The Pentecost does not connect itself with this, though of course everything is connected with the passover. Here they are not escaping from the condition they were in, but they are in the living enjoyment of the condition they are brought into, of that which God has brought them into.

This is what we have to look at in our worship: we should be enjoying more what God has brought us into. We have to watch that our worship should not be only the remembrance of what we have been brought out of, but the enjoyment of that into which we have been brought. Here it is all joy, and rest,



and blessedness. You will find in Leviticus that it is all connected with the people being brought out of the land of Egypt—it is all one thing—the passover, of course, is the foundation of everything; but besides this, I see that man has got into this perfect place of blessing; of our bodies it is not true yet, of course; they belong to this old creation; but in the new man we are connected with Christ up there. And our place down here is that of having the Holy Ghost, who takes of the things of Christ and shews them to us. But it is all connected with the passover, with the feast of unleavened bread, and that was connected with the Sabbath; though it began the evening before the Sabbath, it went on after Satan's power and death and judgment were all over, passed and gone.

What characterises Christianity is the ministration of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost is here consequent on the exaltation of Christ. In this feast of weeks we get in a certain sense the coming of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost came in as a kind of annex to the feast of the firstfruits, only there there was leaven. Then after the harvest and after the vintage came the feast of tabernacles, when they were to keep not only seven days but *eight*; which brings in heavenly things. When Christ comes the Jews will literally get their rest, and they will celebrate the grace which has given them all this blessing.

What the unbelieving brethren of Christ sought was that He should shew Himself. He says, I cannot do that; I can die, but I cannot shew myself to the world; my time is not yet come; I cannot keep the feast of tabernacles in any true sense. And so there is no such thing in the present time as keeping the feast of tabernacles; there is no antitype of it. "Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come, but your time is alway ready; the world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up unto this feast." That word "yet" should not be there. He just goes up privately afterwards to teach the people.

Then on the eighth day He says (for there *was* an eighth day): "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This brings in the Spirit. He gives us the Spirit now instead of the feast of tabernacles—a full flowing stream. This is our portion till He comes.

But now mark, beloved brethren, it is "If any man *thirst*." It is not as the Holy Ghost came upon Balaam, and other cases. That might be without any thirsting at all. But it is "If any man *thirst*." We get the same thing in Revelation: "Let him that is *athirst* come."

Thus we have poor bodies, bodies of humiliation,

but we have got the Holy Ghost, and therefore "our conversation is in heaven." And that word means all the associations, everything belonging to a man; as we say, "That man is a Dublin man;" which means that his family, his business, his belongings are in Dublin; so our place and belongings are in heaven, and we are just looking and waiting for Him to come and take us up there. For the Holy Ghost comes down, not only to associate me with Christ risen, but with Christ glorified. We are not yet in it, but, where the heart thirsts, it already gets full satisfaction there; otherwise people are thirsting after other things, and there is a famine in the land. Wherever the flesh works there is thirst; there is no such thing as the new nature thirsting. When a man has once come to Christ and drunk, then "out of his belly flow rivers of living water."

You see the Holy Ghost is the source of life. We are "born of the Spirit" in chapter iii.; in chapter iv. we get the full purpose of the Spirit in worship; and here it is flowing forth from the believer as "rivers of living water." We have the full power and life and liberty of the Holy Ghost in spite of all that is around us in this world. So we have it instead of the feast of tabernacles. The Jews will have the literal thing soon, but with us it is entirely heavenly.

People sometimes say they will not know till

the day of judgment whether they are saved or not. But before the judgment day comes, as all here I trust know, Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, and thence comes the Holy Ghost to be rivers of living water in believers; so that I do not wait until Christ comes out to tell me whether I am saved or not, because He has sent the Holy Ghost already to tell me, and I know it.

“Rivers of living water.” All these blessed things flows out. He is the source of refreshment and blessing. I am told in Colossians iii. to “set my affections on things above.” How can I set them if I do not know what they are? Now the Holy Ghost shews us our present relationships. “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.” “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” We have received the Holy Ghost, and what does He do? He tells us about our sins, our failures, most certainly, but He has come to tell us, not of things of this world, but of the things that are freely given to us by God; and we do know something of those things. When Moses and Elias came to the Mount of Transfiguration did they not freely talk with the Lord? and does that tell me

nothing of what the intimacy up there is? If I am going to walk in white with Him up there—if I am going to have a white stone with a new name in it, the pledge of His secret approval, just as in a family a child has a pet name that has no meaning to strangers—is that nothing? There will be walking on streets of gold—holiness. We get the blessedness up there more and more revealed, the Lord using figurative expressions to let us into it.

And then another thing. Supposing my heart is right with God, what will be my desire for the saints? That every one of them should be exactly what would be to Christ's glory; that there should not be a single thing in one of them that should not answer to Christ's desire for them.

These things are spiritually discerned of course. The Holy Ghost comes to take these things that are not seen to reveal them to us. We get these grapes of Eshcol brought into the wilderness for us, the grapes of Canaan, of the land.

Then, in view of all this, what is my responsibility? As to my acceptance, that is *not* my responsibility. I was lost, entirely lost, but that has all been settled by God Himself, and now I am in Christ. My responsibility is now that I should represent Christ. He represents me before God, and my responsibility is to represent

Him before the world ; and that is where failure comes in. That is what I have to look at in every step that I take in this world. I have to ask myself, Shall I be an epistle of Christ or not in doing this ?

“ Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water ”—out of his inmost affections—out of what a man is in the bottom of his heart, as we say, shall flow streams of refreshment to others ; the poor vessel is so full that it overflows. We cannot bring it out as it is in heaven, of course : but we can bring it out as the Holy Ghost brings it in to us here ; and *then* we have the feast of tabernacles. When the Lord comes again the feast will be literally come : there will be the harvest and the vintage, and then the full blessing ; but, *until* it comes, we have the Holy Ghost instead of it, and our place that of waiting for Christ ; we are converted to wait for God’s Son from heaven.

Until then what characterises the Christian is that he has the Holy Ghost. God has sealed him by the Holy Ghost, made him know Christ by the Holy Ghost, brought him in spirit and heart into those things where Christ is, with whom God has associated him. If I am careless of course it is not so, but if I am walking in the Spirit all these things will shine out in me. He has made us the habitation of the Spirit ; our bodies are the temples of the Holy

Ghost; so that all that God is, in its right time and place and measure, flows out from us as refreshing streams in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. That is what a Christian is; and may God give us to walk faithfully, and lowly, and humbly with Him in it to His glory. Amen.

(J. N. D.)

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What a comfort to know that I can lean on God every day. I can never point to an hour in which I do not know the power of God with me, if I know how to use it as a vessel dealt with by God.

(G. V. W.)

## A POSTSCRIPT.\*

TOUCHING again for a moment the question of faith, it may be seasonable to add a word or two as to its warrant, its opportunity, and its attestation or proof.

If, for instance, I am struck with the astounding boldness of faith in accepting as facts and realities "things which do not appear," and hazarding everything, even eternity, on the certainty of their existence, and I ask, What *warrant* can I have for this faith, for believing that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived? What ground can I have for such a firm persuasion that a thing is which has never been attested by any human evidence, or that an event will happen which has no precedent nor external testimony for its support? My answer is: *I have the word of the living God*; and that is enough, that is ample warrant for the boldest stretch of faith. "Thus saith the Lord" is a more complete and indisputable authority for my faith than can be found in the whole realm of creation. *His* promise is

\* To "Faith and Hope." (See page 114.)



enough to dispel every doubt ; *His* sword to settle every dispute ; *His* voice to silence every other in heaven or earth or hell. "Hath he said and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good ?"

But, on the other hand, if there is no word of God for me in this or that, however much I may desire it, or deem it right, or count upon it, I have no ground whatever for *faith*. Hope there may be, but not faith. It would be an abuse of the term to connect it with anything that has not the distinct authority of the written word. Faith finds no warrant but in that. This is of the very last importance.

Again, I may ask, What is faith's *opportunity*? What the occasion on which it may find liberty for its exercise ? *When* may I count on its displaying its power on my behalf ? Certainly not at all times. It may be always present, but not always active ; like a lamp burning in the sunshine. There it is undoubtedly, but it is of no use ; it is out of its element, which is darkness, and for which alone it exists. So faith is the believer's lamp, whose privilege it is to bring into nature's darkness that true Light, the Son of God, which alone can reveal the truth he needs, and which can be possessed only by faith.

And oh, how often he proves that it *is* his only resource when all is dark and dreary around him, and he, with no gleam of light to shew the path

of safety, knows not whither to turn for guidance or help! At such a moment as this it is, when the soul is trembling in the thick darkness, and shrinking from the danger and difficulty which ever accompany it, that faith finds its opportunity, sheds light from above, and confers blessing and deliverance which nothing else can give. Then it is that faith proves itself to be unspeakably precious; for without faith it is equally impossible to please God, or to secure the blessing we so much need. When man is at his wit's end this "gift of God," like a faithful friend, steps forward and brings God into the scene, clearing the way for Him to act. It opens the ear to the sweet voice from above which says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And then, through that very grace, and by faith, the soul, revived and encouraged, replies, "When I am weak then am I strong." So that it even becomes the happiest moment for such an one when nature is paralysed and all its energy ceases; for then faith finds its opportunity and displays its power. It sets man aside, and opens the way for the full exhibition of divine power and grace. Blessed moment! "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I *take pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake."

Then, again, as to the *proof* of faith. If I want that proof for my own sake ; if I ask, How do I know that I have faith ? I have only to pursue the ordinary course when doubt is expressed, or when a test is needed, and look for the proof. Or, as James says, "I will shew thee my faith by my works," or, by *its* works, we might say, "for every tree is known by its own fruit." And what clearer proof of the existence and reality of faith can there be than the display of that which it is faith's prerogative to produce, namely, a calm tranquillity where otherwise storms would be ; quietness, peace, and rest of soul where otherwise would be confusion, alarm, perhaps despair ; the steady maintenance of a course too which evidently is sustained by more than human power ? But if these are found, as sentinels guarding the soul in times of peril and dismay, keeping it in sweet and cheerful serenity, perhaps causing it even to rejoice in the Lord greatly, or to walk in an even path of dependence *because it trusts in God*, what more satisfactory proof can there be that faith is there, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen ?"

And is not faith the only true wisdom in this wretched scene, so that what is said of wisdom may be said of it, that it is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and

without hypocrisy?" Faith is all this, for it is patient, restful, and resigned. It can repose, and endure, and wait. It counts upon GOD, and so exclusively that it neither seeks nor desires anything but that which He is pleased to send. It *must* love therefore, and it *cannot* fear. How exquisitely beautiful to behold, and superlatively precious to possess!

These are indeed true marks of true faith; lacking which we ought to be very cautious in assuming the possession of it; the more so because, as I have said before, hope at times so much resembles faith, that when nothing but faith will do for us we may, alas, discover to our cost that we have it not—like a counterfeit note which raises high expectations that are doomed to be dashed to the ground at the very moment when pressure comes, and the discovery is made that it is worthless! Of what immense importance it is, then, that we be well assured that we "have faith in God."

How vividly is this subject illustrated in the earlier pages of Scripture!

Was not Adam's faith in the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head such as to lead him to call her Eve, the mother of all living, at a time when, without faith, he certainly would have called her the mother of all dying; thus expressing the conviction that all who should be born of her, instead

of being the dead ones before God according to the threat, should be the living ones according to the promise? Here was the warrant for his faith, its opportunity also, and its proof.

So with Noah. He accepted the word of God in all simplicity. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." And having seized the opportunity for the display of his faith, he gives full proof of it when he enters that ark peacefully and confidently, with literally *nothing* but the word of God for his faith to rest upon, before "the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened." Magnificent confidence in that word was this, in the face of arrogant and pervading unbelief!

So also with Abraham. Whether in leaving his native country, or entering into the promised land, or in offering up his son Isaac, his only son, you find the same things. In each and every instance faith has its warrant, its opportunity, and its proof; the precious proof of "quietness and confidence" which nature had no part whatever in producing.

Israel, too, in their miserable bondage, believed the message of God through Moses as to the coming judgment and the sheltering blood. Obediently they sprinkled that blood on the night of the drawn sword; and then proved the

reality of their faith by calmly feasting on the lamb, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand.

“And what,” to quote the apostle’s words, “shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also and Samuel, and of the prophets.” And as we thus gaze upon this great cloud of witnesses, let us fearlessly and honestly search our own hearts and lives as to these things.

I would press it most earnestly, assured of the rich and blessed result of faithfulness in this matter, and equally of the sad and bitter fruit of laxity and leniency with ourselves. The flesh may gain a little agreeable liberty by such lenity, and enjoy for a time the sweets of indulgence, but let us not forget the price that will have to be paid for it at last, and what a sorrowful end must follow such a course. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.”

T. L.

## “THERE IS ONE BODY.”

PSALM XCIII. ; 1 COR. III. 16, AND VI. 19.

THESE scriptures set forth a truth which I believe to be of cardinal importance to every one of us, individually as well as corporately : the church as a whole is the temple of God ; and every believer is made such as really, as literally, as absolutely as the temple of old in which God dwelt, only of course in a different way. He dwells in each individual believer in this room to-day. Mark that fact ; ponder it. It is not a question of opinion ; it is God's truth. If people do not bow to Scripture, it is of no more use to argue with them, than it is to talk to the ignorant scavenger about the highest principles of mathematics. I am deeply and thoroughly persuaded that I have a right to demand of every servant of Christ to bow down his whole moral being to the authority of Scripture.

The truth presented here is not one about which you may think this or that. *God has a house here on earth.* Take in that fact, beloved ; ponder it. Do not say it is what we *ought* to

be, but what we *are*; and then see the conduct that flows from it; see what becomes God's house: "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever."

This is the basis of the truth which underlies all discipline from the time that God had a house on earth. We never hear a word about God dwelling with man until redemption is accomplished. But the moment that Israel is out of Egypt, on the shore of the Red Sea, the first note that falls on our ear from the lips of a redeemed people is: "I will prepare him an habitation." And the moment the last pin is put into the earthly tabernacle, the glory of God comes down in haste to take up His abode in the midst of His people.

But His presence demands and secures holiness. Read Joshua vi., vii., and see how we get there two grand consequences of the self-same presence: Jericho in ruins, and the heap of stones in the valley of Achor. One man dared to defile the assembly of God! How solemn it is! It was a fine thing to see those bulwarks crumbling to dust beneath the feet of God's people. But mark: The same presence that laid Jericho in ruins could not allow that one man's sin to escape notice. The Holy Ghost has penned these records for us, and it is our bounden duty to hang over them, and to seek to drink into our souls the instruction in them.



The very instincts of faith ought to have taught Joshua that there was some hindrance. God's people were His habitation. That fact gave them a characteristic which marked them off from every nation upon earth. No other nation knew aught of that great privilege but Israel. But God is God; He will be true to Himself; He will take care of His great name. Joshua thought the glory of that great name was involved; but there are more ways than one to maintain that glory.

If Jehovah is present to give victory over His enemies, He is also present to discipline His people. "Israel hath sinned!" God does not say, One man has sinned; find him out. No; it is the six hundred thousand of Israel, because Israel is one nation; one divine presence in their midst stamped and marked and formed their unity. Do not try to reason about it, brethren: but bow down your whole moral being to that truth. Do not judge it, but let it judge you. "Israel hath sinned;" that is the reason why they could not get the victory. And Israel must come up man by man, so that he who has transgressed the covenant of Jehovah may be taken. God cannot go on with unjudged evil. Weakness is no hindrance; wickedness is. Can God lend the sanction of His presence to evil? Never! If we are God's dwelling place, we *must* be holy. This is one of

those eternal principles which can never be given up.

But the question is raised: How could it be said that Israel had sinned? Six hundred thousand innocent people! The answer is, *the nation is one*; and that unity has to be maintained and confessed.

In Leviticus xxiv. we read that twelve loaves were placed on the golden table before the Lord continually, with the seven lamps of the golden candlestick to throw their light upon them. The end of the same chapter shews us a man brought outside the camp, where all Israel is to stone him with stones. Why this grouping of passages? It is full of power. The grouping of Scripture is among some of its brightest glories; the very way in which the Holy Ghost groups its materials commands our attention. Every fact, every circumstance tends to illustrate the infinite depths of its moral glories.

Why then do we find this connection in Leviticus? For the simple purpose of illustrating this great principle. Faith's power to grasp the eternal truth of Israel's unity, and to confess it in face of everything:—a grand, magnificent, practical truth. There is first the divine side: what Israel was in God's mind; and then, what Israel might bear under God's discipline. And it ever behoves the faithful company to confess and maintain the original truth of God, even in

the midst of the ruin around. I earnestly, urgently, ardently press the necessity as from God to-day, to maintain the great truth of the unity of the body of Christ, as that which we have to hold, maintain, and confess in face of everything. There is no truth in the whole range of revelation that the devil hates more cordially than the truth of the unity of the people of God.

Elijah on mount Carmel, when the kingdom was divided, called for twelve stones with which to build the altar. But Israel is no longer twelve tribes, it might be said; Israel's unity is broken and gone. No; it is an indissoluble unity; a unity which is never to be surrendered. Israel is twelve while God's eye rests on the twelve loaves on the golden table, on the twelve stones in Aaron's breast-plate. Faith holds fast that truth, and Elijah builds his altar of twelve stones. The unity is never to be given up, though it may be like a chain flung across a river, with the tide flowing over it so that you cannot see it. It was one on the day of Pentecost; it will be one in the glory; but it is as true to-day that there is one body and one Spirit, as it was when the Holy Ghost penned the fourth of Ephesians. How is this unity formed? By the Holy Ghost; it is union with the Man at the right hand of God.

Thus I get three grand substantial reasons for

a life of holiness: I am not to dishonour Him to whom I am united; I am not to grieve the Spirit by whom I am united; and I am not to grieve the members to whom I am united.

I feel my responsibility to urge this truth upon you, beloved hearers. Let not the devil cheat you of the blessing of walking in it. See that you realise its formative, influential power. Think how your state and walk at this moment are affecting the saints in New Zealand. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." All Israel was affected by Achan's sin. He thought nobody saw, nobody knew, and quietly hid it in his tent. If this is your state, there is a complete stoppage at once; there is no more power put forth on your behalf by God; there is power truly, but power, not to act for you in victory, but to act towards you in discipline; power to smash you to pieces.

Let us not measure the word of God by our consciences or by our sensibilities, but in simplicity believe what it says. We read that there is one Spirit uniting every member to the Head in glory, and uniting every single member on the earth to every other. In this body a saint out of communion is like a waster in a candle; he affects the state of the saints of God everywhere. Confess this great truth, own it simply, come what may. Never deny it, never give it up. You

say, Brethren are smashed up ! I answer, I am not to be occupied with brethren, but with the truth of God. Take your eyes off brethren, and fix them on the truth of God. Are you conscientiously gathered on the ground of the one body ? I speak freely and pointedly to you, because I believe this truth is assailed. In 1848 the Head was assailed—the Person of Christ. In 1882 I feel that the truth of the one body is assailed. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and is joined to all who belong to Him. There is no such thing as independence in the word of God. The assembly in each place is the corporate local expression of the whole church of God, as we saw of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament.

This truth like a golden thread shines from cover to cover of the Book of God, and is always known to faith. Why did Daniel pray towards Jerusalem ? The house of God is not there to the eye of man ; but it *is* there to faith. Faith still recognises the twelve loaves upon the golden table, and prays, though the lions' den be its reward.

Again, Paul before Agrippa. The nation may be scattered "among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other," but Paul will still speak of "The promise unto which our twelve tribes hope to come ;" and the verb is in the singular. Could Paul have *shewn* them ?

And are you going to give up the unity of the church of God? Are you going to become a member of a dead chapel? Are you going to have to do with things got up by the devil to cast dust in the eyes of God's saints, and to hide from the mind the everlasting supreme truth of the one body? Is the body of Christ a little society based upon certain principles? How can you talk of "joining" anything? If you are converted to Christ, all the "joining" is done! You are "added to the Lord;" you are a part of that which man cannot touch for a moment; no one can cut off one single member of the body of Christ, which, according to the eternal purpose of God, and according to the operation of the Holy Ghost, is united to Him.

Have I got to organise a body? If I had, it would be but rubbish which the first blast of His glory would destroy. The Holy Ghost came down at Pentecost to form a body, and He is here still. I would not surrender that great truth for ten thousand worlds; for, in the full view of all that has occurred, I can boldly say I have a clearer mind and a firmer belief that it is the truth of God for this present day than I had forty-two years ago when I first placed my foot on the ground which, through God's grace, I now occupy. It is not to be touched by any efforts of man. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever." When all this scene is ended? For

ever and for ever. In the glory it will be "the *holy* city new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," in which He will shew forth "the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

(C. H. M.)

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## THE UNCHANGING ONE.

HEBREWS XIII. 8.

A CLOSE examination of the Epistles shews us that each one of them has a motto which expresses its teaching in a special way. I think we shall see that the verse I have just read gives us one special line in this Epistle to the Hebrews.

I will read in paraphrase verse 7, which elucidates verse 8, and which is not the same as verse 17: "Remember them who have had [I read "had," as they were now dead] the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: considering the end of whose conversation, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," &c.

We thus see that the apostle is alluding to teachers who have passed away, and sums up their lives, adding that we are "not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines," because "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Thus verse 8 links together 7 and 9, and becomes the foundation on which verse 9 is based.



Having called your attention to the context, I now seek to connect the verse with the teaching of the whole epistle.

No verse in the whole Scripture has been more comfort to the saints of God than this. In the changes and vicissitudes of life, how we love to come back to such a passage as this to comfort and console our hearts!

But turning back, first of all, to the commencement of the epistle, we have, in chapter i., the divinity of our blessed Lord, and, in chapter ii., His humanity. In chapter i. we have a wonderful catalogue of the glories of Christ. Take, for example, verse 2. He is the Son, the Heir, the Creator; and in verse 8 He is addressed: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." And, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Thus we get His unchangeable character as a divine Person presented before us. All things may pass away, but He remains the same: unchangeable, divine, the Creator.

In chapter ii. we find in every verse, from verse 5, the humanity of our blessed Lord. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to

call them brethren." And especially verse 14: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And again, in verse 17: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

We have thus, beloved, the full proof of the Person of Christ brought out to us in these two chapters. Had He not been man, He could not have died for sinners. Had He not been God, His sacrifice could not have availed for all His people. And the Person of Christ is always the same: "Thou remainest." "Yesterday" He *was* in a past eternity; "to-day" He sits on the throne of God, and to-morrow He still abides—the same throughout all ages. To-day He is a Man sitting on the throne of God for us, and we rejoice in it; but especially do we rejoice in the fact, that through all eternity He will never cease to be a Man. And though He is thus Man, He is also God, and He will never cease to be. "Very God and very man." The same that He was down here on earth, that same will He be when we are in glory with Him, and see Him face to face.

But when the blessed Lord and Saviour was down here on earth, it was rather the presentation of God to man; now that He is up there in heaven, it is more the presentation of man to God. In that passage in John xvii., so familiar to us, He prays: "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." He is there praying that *as Man* He might be glorified with the glory that He had with God before the world was. And we never understand Christianity, unless we take hold of the fact, that the blessed Lord is seated as *Man* at the right hand of God.

Thus, taking the first two chapters of the epistle in their general aspect, we can say that He is in His Person "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Passing on to the next division of the epistle, we find that, as to His Priesthood, He is the same—the "Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."

However, I should say, in passing, that the Epistle to the Hebrews is only and entirely in the wilderness. The moment that we get the person of the priest introduced to us, we get the people shewn to us in the wilderness. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the

feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Passing on to chapter v., we find that He "glorified not himself:" "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." As a Priest He abides for ever; so that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," as the Priest.

Allow me to direct your attention to one or two passages as to the Priesthood, as it regards ourselves. We read in chapter ix.: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." That is to say, the blessed Lord, as Priest, is before God as the representative of His people.

This will be clear, if we allude for one moment to the Aaronic priesthood. The names of the twelve tribes of the people of Israel were on the high priest's breastplate, and on his shoulders, so that they were always presented before God when the priest appeared before Him. In like manner now, Christ presents before God every one of

His people, and upholds them there with everlasting strength and everlasting love. Aaron goes right into the presence of God, bearing His people's names upon his breast, so that God cannot look at Aaron without seeing the names of His people. So now God cannot look upon Christ without seeing His people. What joy to our hearts to remember that whenever God looks upon Christ, He sees our names on His breast! He appears in the presence of God for us.

Now, are not some of us disheartened at times? Sick ones, for instance, who cannot pray. It may be that *they* cannot pray; but there is One in the presence of God who is always presenting them before Him, and who is there to make intercession on their behalf. And be it remembered that the more intensely the light beats upon that breastplate, only the more distinctly do our names come out in His presence. "In the light, as he is in the light," but presented there in all the perfection of Christ Himself. The names were written in Aaron's breastplate on precious stones, and we know that the brighter the light, the more the beauty of precious stones appears. Just so, God not only sees our names distinctly, but also sees them encompassed with all the beauty and preciousness of Christ. I may change, I may be disheartened to-day; I may be cast down to-morrow; but I am always presented there in all the beauty of Christ. He is "the same yester-

day, and to-day, and for ever," in the presence of God.

We read, He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This is another aspect of the Priesthood. He is able to sympathise with His people because He has passed through similar experiences to our own, only apart from sin. We get this twofold truth: the blessed Lord passed through every possible experience of man, but apart from sin. We do not need sympathy for sin, we need to judge it. It is for our infirmities we desire sympathy.

His sympathy is *unfailing*. I suppose all of us have felt in times of trial and isolation that there is no one, absolutely no one, who can enter into our sorrow and depression. No one understands me, we say; sympathy I want, but there is no one to sympathise with me. But *He* is not One who cannot enter into my feelings! Why do the saints, perhaps, fail to enter into my feelings? It is that I may learn the blessedness of being able to say:

"Jesus, Thou art enough  
The mind and heart to fill."

When we learn His sympathy—I will not say we shall not want the sympathy of the saints, for it is good for us to have, and to love to have, the sympathy of others—but we shall learn to be independent of it, and satisfied with His alone. My trial may go on for days, months, years, and

human sympathy cannot be kept up to the same point for ever ; so here only we find a sympathy that never changes ; the sympathy of One who is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." I find an antidote here to all my sorrows ; I have One who understands me ; One who enters into my case ; One who is always by me, and enters into my condition ; He is not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities, but One who

" Knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same."

I just touch on one more aspect of the priesthood, which we find in chapter vii. "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death : but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Here we get the unchangeableness of the Priesthood. All is contrast in this epistle. Under the old dispensation the priest was living to-day, and dead to-morrow. If Aaron, who had taken up our cause, were to die, our cause lapsed for the moment. But our great High Priest is able to save His people all the way through the wilderness, because "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is therefore not presumption for me to say, I am *sure* I shall

be brought safe into God's rest, because I have to do with One who ever lives for me. Such an One is our High Priest; He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Allow me to put a question to you, as well as to myself, before I pass on to the next point. Has His Priesthood its true weight with our hearts? You do not get it brought out, for example, in Ephesians, for there we are not represented as down here, waiting for the Lord, but as seated in Him already in the heavenlies. Wherever we are shewn as waiting for the Lord Jesus, we are in the wilderness, going on to Him, and the Priesthood insures at the same time our safe passage through the wilderness, until we reach Him. There are many difficulties by the way, and Satan suggests the doubt, Are you sure you will ever get through? I answer, No, I am not sure that *I* can do anything; but I measure the difficulties and the trials of the way not by myself, but by Him "who is able to save me to the uttermost." What consolation! He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever"!

In chapter viii. we get the introduction of the new covenant with Israel, and then, in chapter x., comes the efficacy of the sacrifice. After introducing it in chapter ix., with the words, "Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year," he goes on: "And every priest standeth



daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins : but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God ; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us : for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

The one sacrifice of Christ avails for ever. We get here the everlasting efficacy of that sacrifice, in contrast with the non-efficacy of the sacrifices of the Old Testament. The fact that the sacrifice of Christ is *not* repeated, and that He retains His seat at the right hand of God, proves that the efficacy of His sacrifice never ceases.

Now I am going back to the A of christian knowledge. What is this A ? It is that *our sins are forgiven*. And yet many saints do not know it ! Once under the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, I can nevermore be brought in guilty before God. God never, *never* imputes sin as guilt to those who are cleansed in the blood of Christ. We get it in this scripture : " By one

offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There is no question any more between us and sin. Truly sin is *in* me, and will be in me till the Lord comes; but the sacrifice of Christ cleanses me once and for all before God, as to its condemning power. This is the A of Christianity.

But, beloved, let me put another question to you: How many of us are living in the sunshine of this simple truth, that, as to imputing sin, there is no possibility of a shade between God and myself? I am made whiter than snow—as white as God Himself can make me. True, if we walk badly, God will come in, and chasten, but He will never more impute sin: it is "By one offering perfected for ever." Even if I am betrayed into sin, yet, if I know the full value of the blood of Christ, I shall know that God will never impute it to me as *guilt*. I would not for a moment lessen the character of sin, but, on the other hand, never let us lower the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ. In eternity itself we shall have to trace all back to the cross of our blessed Lord. There, in the new creation, in the full blessedness of it all, we shall ever go back, as the cause of all, to the cross of Christ, and acknowledge it as the ground of all our blessing.

As we thus view the efficacy of the blood of Christ, we again say, He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

We now pass on to the twelfth chapter. In the eleventh we get examples of faith who have passed away. In the twelfth He abides the same, our example for ever. We have a long category in chapter xi., not of good deeds, but of acts of faith. And why so? That we may see that Christ surpasses them all. Angels, Moses, Aaron, Abraham, David, all are brought before us in this epistle, that they may disappear as the stars before the sun. So these heroes of faith vanish away before the excellency of the One with whom they are compared, or rather contrasted. Thus, after the long catalogue of faithful ones we read: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Great as these were, illustrious as they have been, our eyes are not to be directed to them, but to Christ. He is the complete example of the life of faith. He said: "If any man will serve me, let him *follow* me." He is the Man of faith; and He is brought before us that we may take Him as our example: "He hath left us an

example that we should follow his steps." It is wonderful how He is brought out in the word of God, and yet not wonderful when we consider who He is. We may well pray that He should fill the vision of our souls. The Bible presents Christ to us everywhere, and at every turn. In the world sometimes one and sometimes another is brought before our minds as an object of admiration, but in the Bible it is always Christ.

John says: "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." He is always the example of His people, so that in this respect again He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Passing on to another branch of this subject, I will just go over the epistle as to the points we have been considering, before going on to the consequences of this unchangeableness.

We have, then, seen that Christ is ever the same as to His Person, in chapters i. and ii. He is the same as to His Priesthood in chapters v. and vii. He is the same as to the efficacy of His sacrifice in chapters ix. and x. He is the same as to being the example of His people. And now let us look at the consequences to us of His being "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Everything that is connected with Christ partakes of what He is in Himself, and therefore abides for ever because He is eternal. We sometimes speak of souls "passing into eternity,"

but this expression is not a true one. As soon as a soul is converted it passes into eternity. Eternity commences for the believer as soon as he is in Christ. From that moment he has life everlasting. An unconverted person when he dies passes into eternity, but a believer is in eternity as soon as he is in Christ. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Our *salvation* is eternal because *He* is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It is an "*eternal* salvation." The contrast no doubt is as to the temporal deliverance of God's people in old time, but the word "eternal" has its special significance from its connection with Him who is eternal. It is not being saved to-day and lost to-morrow. A Christian said to me lately: "It is quite possible to be saved to-day, but it depends on me whether or not I am lost to-morrow." What an error! It depends on *Christ*! The salvation that He bestows on His people possesses the same unchangeable character that He has Himself. It is a perfect thing, and will not be more perfect than it is now even when we stand in the presence of the Lord in glory.

In chapter ix. we get two other things which are said to be eternal: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." And "For

this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Redemption, you see, is eternal, and also the inheritance.

And one other passage, in chapter xiii.: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." "Everlasting" is here the same word; it is eternal.

The point I call your attention to is, that the redemption, the inheritance, and the covenant are all eternal. The covenant is with His ancient people Israel, but we get the spiritual blessings of it. Everything connected with Himself is eternal, because *He* is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." It takes our eyes away from ourselves, and directs them to Him and what He is; that gives the character to everything that we have in Him.

I pass now to the exhortation: "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not

with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."

I take first the exhortation in the last verse I have read. We see from this that there can be no divers and strange doctrines in the church of God. Christ is always the same, so the truth connected with Him must be always the same. Of course there may be development of it, opening of it out, and the truth may be lost and recovered in that sense; but a *new* doctrine is a *false* doctrine. A thing that bears the stamp of novelty must be false, because *He* is always "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

A saint may think he is in no danger from false doctrines because he is resting upon the sacrifice of Christ; but what is it that alone preserves us? The being grounded in the truth of the Person of Christ.

Take for instance the doctrine of the non-eternity of punishment. It is a *new* doctrine, and therefore I doubt its truth. But people are carried away by it because it suits their natural mind. Satan speaks to us of "advanced truth," of "liberal opinions," and so on. But all we have to understand and to hold to is what the apostles had and taught in the beginning. The more thoroughly we are grounded in the teaching of God's word, the more resolutely we shall refuse the divers and strange doctrines that are brought to us.

Teachers pass away ; Christ never passes away. They were very dear to the hearts of the saints, and the apostle says : "*Remember them.*" They are dear to the heart of God, and they ought to be dear to ours. But, suppose I base my faith upon a teacher, however dear, he may pass away. Suppose Paul were here now, and I based my faith upon him, he might die and pass away. Do not forget that behind the teacher Christ is there, and He never passes away. The time is coming when, if the Lord tarries, all whom we now value will pass away ; but if I am on this rock nothing will disturb me, for I have Christ, who will never pass away. In these days it is exceedingly important that we should have hold of this truth.

In chapter xii. we read, in relation with earthly government : "And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Our kingdom cannot be moved. We daily see the transitory character of earthly kingdoms. The dagger of the assassin carries terror to the heart of every sovereign in Europe. The governments which were thought the most safe, that were deemed to be built on a rock as men would say, are being shaken to their very foundations. But we have a kingdom that can never be moved. No foe can ever touch its foundations.



He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," and hence, those things which cannot be shaken are ours.

I would fain add one other word; how much the faith of the saints of God has been tried in these days. But suppose every teacher that God has given *His* church were to make shipwreck to-morrow, what should we lose? Christian fellowship is very sweet, and we should lose it; but we do not lose *Christ*. It is this only—fellowship with Him in the power of the Holy Ghost—that can lift us up above everything through which we are passing. Then, though friends change (and they must change, one failing us to-day and another to-morrow), though assemblies are wrecked here and there, still the Spirit takes me and sets me on the unfailing rock—*Christ*. And then, whatever may be the experiences through which I may pass, and the sorrow too, I have One with me who walks *upon* the waves of the sea, and more still, who can make *me* walk upon the waves of the sea so long as my eye is upon Him.

This is the word upon my heart. If we are in company with the unchanging One, we shall be calm as we go on our way, because it is not a question of friends, it is not a question of assemblies, it is a question of *Christ*, and He will never fail us: He is "The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

(E. D.)

## A BRIEF OUTLINE OF APOSTOLIC TEACHING RECOVERED IN THESE DAYS.

WHEN God has been pleased to give His redeemed ones a revelation of His mind for them He has not repeated it, but providing by recording it in writing, He looks for His people to preserve it, and to conform to it. It was so with Israel and the law. It is the same with Christian revelation. Jehovah gave the law to Israel, and caused Moses to write it in a book, that it might be preserved to future generations, legislating, too, for its precepts to be kept in the remembrance of the Israelites by the ordinance which enjoined the reading of it in the ears of all Israel at the feast of tabernacles every seventh year. (Deut. xxx. 9-13.)

The wisdom of putting it in writing was evidenced centuries afterwards, when in the reign of Josiah the original book, it would seem, written by Moses, was found by Hilkiah the priest in the house of the Lord. (2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.) Thus the original transcript of the law was preserved intact to the days of that

king, surviving the attempts of Ahaz to stamp out the worship of Jehovah, when the doors of the temple were shut, and the lamps were put out. The Mosaic ritual was indeed for a time in abeyance, but the book of the law, by which the priests and people could learn about it, was all that time safely hidden away in the temple, to be brought out into the light, a century later, in the days of his great-great-grandson. God's word does not pass away till all is fulfilled. Josiah felt the solemnity of that, when the law was read in his hearing by Shaphan the scribe; and afterwards, when the answer of Huldah the prophetess told him, that the threatened judgments would surely be executed.

But not only does God reveal His mind, and put it in writing; He also, in His great grace, acts at certain periods in man's history to recover for His people truth once known, but, it may be, long lost by human carelessness and indifference. In this, too, the wisdom of God, in putting His revelation in writing, becomes apparent; for to the written word He turns His people to learn His mind, recorded as it was of old in words taught the sacred writers by the Holy Ghost.

Now something of God's action in recovering truth we read of in the days of Ezra the scribe, when the returned remnant had recovered for them out of the law of their God the true way of keeping the feast of tabernacles. (Neh. viii. 13-17.)

Of the unchangeableness of the word of God as regards judgment on the people, if they broke the law, Josiah and those with him were made sensible by the answer of the prophetess. The joy of heart, which the recovery of truth long forgotten can give to true-hearted souls, the people experienced, when, obeying the divine word, they sat under booths throughout that feast of tabernacles. "There was very great gladness," is the inspired statement. Judgments announced, and the certainty of the execution of them, witness of Jehovah's righteousness, and of the people's failure. Hope, too, as souls learn of blessings predicted, may be engendered in the heart, since, if one part of God's word is fulfilled, other parts will also receive their accomplishment. But truth recovered and acted on, can generate gladness in the hearts of those who conform to it. With this action of God in grace, in recovering truth after truth long forgotten, we in our day are also familiar.

As with Israel, who received the whole law from Moses, so with Christians: God revealed all the fresh truth He meant to unfold for our instruction during the lifetime of the apostles and prophets, who were in those days known channels of revelation. Nothing new in the way of revealed truth has been communicated since John, the last surviving apostle, laid down his pen. And all that was needful to be perpetuated

was put in writing ere the canon of scripture was closed. That being the case, since no fresh truth has been revealed in later times, the testimony of the day in apostolic times is the testimony still. God has not supplemented it. He has not cancelled it. He has not changed any part of it. So, to understand what is the full testimony of God for our day, we must go to the divine word to learn what it was when the canon of scripture was closed.

Now one thing against which we are most seriously warned is any theory of development. We are to contend, as those in the days of Jude were exhorted by him to do, for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3.) This supposes a completed revelation, and is in harmony with the injunctions of Paul and of John.

Paul writing to Timothy, in the last canonical letter which came from his hand, tells him : "That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." (2 Tim. i. 14.) The deposit of the faith he was to keep sedulously.

John, writing to the babes in Christ, tells them that it is the last time, and in view of that having come warns them against the spirit of antichrist, which was already in the world. Corruption of truth, and attempts to draw away souls had already begun. The truth had been revealed. So whilst apostasy awaited its full development,

Christian truth, "the faith" as Jude calls it, had been already made known. Nothing more was to be expected. Hence John exhorts them to let that which they had heard from the beginning abide in them. If that which they had heard from the beginning abode in them, they would continue in the Son and in the Father. (1 John ii. 18, 24.)

In the same strain the Lord Jesus spoke in His addresses to the angel in Thyatira, in Sardis, and in Philadelphia: "Unto you I say the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I put upon you none other burden, but that which ye have, hold fast till I come." (Rev. ii. 24, 25.) Sending to the angel of the church in Sardis, He says, "Remember, therefore, how thou hast received, and heard; and hold fast, and repent." (iii. 3.) And encouraging those in Philadelphia, He says, "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (iii. 11.) These several injunctions suppose that the Christian faith was known as a revelation completed, to which nothing more would be added; and that what the saints had to do was to hold it fast.

But here the grace of the Lord shines out. If truth once known has been forgotten, so that saints on earth at any given time have never personally had it, we learn from His language to

these churches that He would not hold souls responsible for that which had been let slip by their progenitors. "That which ye have, hold fast till I come" assures of this on the one hand, whilst exhorting all on the other not to forget, nor to let slip any portion of truth which had reached them. Had the saints in each generation acted up to these injunctions, no portion of Christian teaching would ever have been forgotten. Clearly it was never the Lord's mind that any part of it should have been let slip. But if once let go, He would not hold individuals responsible for that which they had never known. All, however, which He knew they had, He would look for them to keep. Hence, in a day in which God has recovered so much of Christian teaching, it is dangerous for any one to slight, or to refuse to receive, that which He may be ministering afresh from His written word. Responsibility is plainly incurred if we have heard it.

But to return to the question, What is the present testimony? In its completeness we must reply, it is nothing short of full Christian teaching. Recovered truths, in the day in which they are recovered, have naturally a prominent place in men's minds. We can all understand this. And, as truths just recovered, God will surely occupy us with them. But since each recovered truth is only a part of the whole Christian faith, it should be held as such in its right connection,

and in due proportion with all the other truths of the revelation. It is, it can be, but part of the one great whole. Now if we were to make it, or any portion of it, or any portion of the Christian faith the testimony of the day, we should be in spirit, however unconsciously, furthering heretical teaching. An heretical spirit, *i.e.*, a choosing of one's creed, would be manifested, if we made one or more doctrines, whether true or false, the testimony of the day. True Christian teaching would embrace all that God has made known for our instruction, as far as we have got hold of it. Its aim would be nothing less than the full teaching set forth in the writings of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament.

Not that this would confine us to New Testament revelation. It would comprise Old Testament revelation as well; as Paul writing to Timothy reminds him that he has known from a child the sacred writings, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. And he tells him that every scripture is divinely inspired,\* and is profitable for doctrine, for re-

\* Not as stated in the text of the revised version of 1881, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable," &c. There is a similar construction of the Greek in Hebrews iv. 13, which may help us to seize the bearing of the statement in 2 Timothy iii. 15, πάντα δὲ γυμνά καὶ τετραχλισμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ. "All things *are* naked and open," not "all things naked are also open," &c. So



proof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete (*ἄριστος*), fully fitted unto every good work. (2 Tim. iii. 15-17.) So Peter exhorts believers from among the Jews to give heed to the word of prophecy as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, till the day should dawn, and the day star arise in their hearts. (2 Peter i. 19.)

By the apostles, who were themselves vessels used of God for the revelation of full Christian truth, Old Testament teaching was not forgotten. It had its place as part of God's revelation, and was to be studied, and kept in remembrance as instruction suited for Christians. Peter and Paul owned that, and maintained it. So also must we. Hence on the one hand no one can be in the full current of the testimony of the day who has not received the truth recovered in our time; and on the other, the truth so recovered must always be received, if we would be in subjection to God's mind, as but part of that testimony which each Christian is responsible to hold fast.

Now to Paul, be it remembered, was it given by the unfolding of the mystery to complete the word of God. (Col. i. 25.) If any one then could have insisted on some part of Christian teaching as comprising the testimony of his day, it might

πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος. "Every scripture is divinely inspired and profitable," &c., not "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable."

surely have been Paul, to whom the mystery of the Christ was first made known. (Eph. iii. 3, 4.) But he is the one of all the apostles, the general outline of whose ministry has been given us in God's word. And this surely is not without practical instruction for us. A double ministry, he tells us, had been committed to him. He was a minister of the gospel, and a minister of the church. (Col. i. 23, 25.) How he had exercised his ministry at Ephesus, where his labours had been crowned with much success, his farewell address to the elders of that assembly, when they met him by invitation at Miletus, sufficiently instructs us. He testified, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He testified, too, the glad tidings of the grace of God. In addition he both preached the kingdom, and declared all the counsel of God. (Acts. xx. 21-27.) A range of truth this was, embraced by his ministry there, which certainly for centuries afterwards was in its fulness forgotten.

But we live in a day in which, through the goodness of our God, much of it has been recovered. Recovery of truth has characterised the working of the Spirit of God in the church at intervals during the last three hundred years. At the Reformation the great truth of justification by faith was recovered. At a later date the teaching about the new birth was especially insisted on

afresh. In our day how much has been recovered!

Now in seeking to trace this out we shall find it ranges itself for the most part under three great heads, namely, truth about God, truth about the Lord Jesus Christ, and truth connected with teaching about the Holy Ghost.

Beginning with truth about God. Many are familiar now with the scripture teaching about the righteousness of God, and the grace of God. But cannot some remember the time, when the true teaching about the righteousness of God was unknown; and the full teaching about the grace of God was unheard in the churches or chapels they frequented?

Now there are four statements about the righteousness of God, helpful when remembered. God's righteousness apart from law, which simply means that He is righteous, is *revealed* in the gospel (Rom. i. 17), is now *manifested*, having been witnessed of by the law and the prophets (iii. 21), is to be *submitted* to by those hearing of it (x. 3), who, believing God's testimony about His Son, *become* it in Christ. (2 Cor. v. 21.) The need for God's righteousness apart from law, to be revealed in the gospel becomes apparent, since God's wrath from heaven is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom. i. 16-18.) God then, whilst

He is righteous in judging, can be also righteous in justifying sinners. And His righteousness through faith in Christ is now manifested \* unto all them that believe, He having set forth Christ as a mercy seat through faith in His blood, for the shewing forth of His righteousness in respect of the passing by the sins that had taken place before, through the forbearance of God ; for the shewing forth of His righteousness in the present time, that He might be just, and the justifier of him that is of the faith of Jesus.

Of this aspect of God's righteousness the law and the prophets witnessed: the law, by sacrifices appointed for certain sins, which, when duly offered up, ensured to the offerer the forgiveness of his sin ; the prophets, by predicting blessings in righteousness for a people who had utterly failed before God. This righteousness Israel would not submit to, seeking in their folly and blindness to establish their own righteousness through keeping the law.

\* Some uncial manuscripts read as the authorised version, "Unto all, and upon all them that believe." The oldest uncials and most textual critics agree in omitting, "*and upon all.*" Probably they are right, for the paragraph 21-31 appears to contemplate those only who are justified from among the Jews and the Gentiles. See especially verses 23, 24, which predicate of all those spoken of as having sinned, that they are justified freely by God's grace.

Are they the only ones who in principle have thus acted? But those who do submit themselves unto it, that God should justify them freely by faith in Christ apart from all works of law, become in Christ illustrations of God's righteousness for ever and ever. Now this teaching, as the apostle states, establishes the law, maintaining unsullied God's righteousness and holiness, whilst providing for the outflow of divine mercy, love, and grace, to those who deserved only the outpouring on them of divine wrath.

Next with reference to the grace of God. How much has been brought out from God's word, which for centuries had been little known! The Father's heart, and the reception of the guilty one by God, are subjects which have often been brought before us. How many have been refreshed and comforted by the ministry of divine grace through God's servants who have departed from our midst! Forgiveness of sins as a present blessing of which the heart is assured—justification likewise, telling of the perfect standing of the believer before the throne of God—with these doctrines we are familiar as with household words. Atonement by blood effected, involving as it does propitiation made, our sins carried away, and divine judgment borne on our behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ; the everlasting efficacy of His death, who has found eternal redemption;

the abiding value of His blood in the eyes of God; the entrance with boldness into the holiest through the veil, His flesh, procured for us by the shedding of His blood; and our being seated now in Him in the heavenlies; in a word, the gospel of the grace of God as set forth chiefly in the Acts, the Romans, the Hebrews, and the Ephesians—all this we have been taught, to which once each of us was a stranger, and which little more than a generation ago was generally unknown.

But speaking of divine grace necessarily brings the Lord Jesus prominently before us. For it is by His death that we share in it. What teaching have we had about Him! Not only is His death full of instruction for us. Of His present place on high, and His very attitude whilst there, we have also learnt the bearing. Nor is it only what He has done, but also what He is doing, which is set forth for our instruction in the word. Atonement already and for ever effected, we know, too, of His present service exercised on behalf of those given to Him by the Father. He is the Shepherd of the sheep, the Bishop of our souls, the washer of our feet, our High Priest, and our Advocate on high. In these first three characters we learn what He does *to* us; in the last two, what He does *for* us in heaven.

The exercise of His priesthood, Aaronic in character, though Melchisedechian in order, not

only consists in the presentation of His blood to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people; but an essential part of it is His present intercession on high on behalf of God's saints, that, coming to the throne of grace, they may receive what He has already asked for—mercy and grace for seasonable help. For the present exercise of His priesthood is needful for His people to get through the wilderness.

Was all this, as set forth in the Hebrews, commonly known half a century ago? Is it yet commonly taught in the different ecclesiastical systems into which the one assembly of God is split up?

Then His advocacy, of which John writes (1 John ii.), called out on behalf of saints who fail, in order to their restoration to communion; was there not a time, and that comparatively a very recent one, when this truth was unheard of, and may we not add, scarcely if at all known? Now how many thousands can rejoice in the knowledge of that, in the efficacy, and in the active service of which all true Christian saints have shared, as they needed it, since the Lord went on high; rejoicing, too, as they learn that He is an Advocate with the Father; thus reminding the failing ones that the link of relationship between God and them is not snapped, though that of communion has been broken for the time by their sin.

Then have we not also heard of the saints' relation to Christ, and of their union with Him; relation to Christ as in Him, with its corresponding truth that He is in us, and union with Him as members of His body? What the Lord told His disciples, "At that day," that is, after His resurrection and the coming of the Holy Ghost, "ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John xiv. 20), has now come to pass. What flows from our being in Him, and He in us, is set forth especially in Romans v. 12-viii. 11; Ephesians, Colossians, and in 1 John. The present condition, and the fortunes of the Head of the race are the condition and fortunes of all ranged under His Headship.

We know the sorrow of that as in Adam. Christians should know the blessedness of such a principle made good to them as in Christ. He has died to sin: we have died with Him. He is risen: we are risen with Him. In Him we are circumcised. With Him we have been buried by baptism unto death. In Him we have obtained an inheritance. With Him we shall reign, sitting with Him upon His throne. But if in Him, He is in us. Hence His walk, His ways, as delineated in the Gospels, become fruitful in instruction for us, as the apostles Paul (Eph. v. 2; Phil. ii.), Peter (1 Peter ii., iii., iv.), and John (1 John ii., iii.) insist upon.

Furthermore we are united to Him, being



members of His body (1 Cor. xii.; Eph. iv., v.; Col. i., ii.), baptised by the Spirit into one body, members of Christ, members one of another, part of Christ, as He first revealed to Paul, then called Saul, when on his way to Damascus, in those memorable words, "Why persecutest thou me?" The body of Christ is therefore viewed as complete on earth, whilst the Head is in heaven, for already some who are part of His body, as viewed in its most comprehensive aspect, had departed to be with Christ. (Acts xxvi. 10.)

Now the body is viewed in Scripture in three aspects, namely, local (1 Cor. xii. 27), comprising all true Christians in any one place; general, as including all of them on earth at any one time (Eph. iv. 16; Col. ii. 19); and universal, as embracing all real Christians from Pentecost to the rapture. (Eph. i. 23.) This body is also the assembly or the church for which Christ died, and which He will present some day to Himself glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. (Eph. v. 27.) What the saints, viewed as Christ's body, are to Him, Acts ix. shews. What the saints, viewed as His assembly, are to Him, Ephesians v. teaches us, and His own words in Matthew xiii. 45, 46 intimate. What they are, as given to Him by His Father, John x., xvii. set forth.

The nearness, then, of the saints to Christ as members of His body, their preciousness to Him

as the church, His bride, the word has taught us. Yet, though written of therein upwards of eighteen centuries ago, must we not all own, that this is part of the truth recovered by divine favour in the last days? In an article like this, one can but touch on the different heads of teaching brought out afresh from the word. And the reader may the better seize these different heads by their being presented in outline, than if his attention were diverted by presenting each head more in detail.

We have just touched on the truths of our relation to Christ, and of our union with Him. This brings in directly truth concerning the Spirit. Because it is as having received the Spirit that we are in Christ and Christ in us (Rom. viii. 9, 10), and that we are united to Him. So we are necessarily led on to the teaching in connection with the Holy Ghost, which has been likewise recovered of late.

Now this may be viewed under three great heads, namely, His personal presence on earth; His dwelling in the assembly; and also in the individual believer.

The Spirit has come to the earth in person, consequent on the Lord going on high. "He was not,"\* we are told, "because that Jesus was not

\* "He was not" does not imply non-existence; but absence from earth. Enoch "was not" when God had

yet glorified." (John vii. 39.) "When he is come," or "having come," said the Lord Jesus (John xvi. 8), speaking of the Holy Ghost as the other Comforter, whom the Father would send in His name to abide with the disciples for ever (John xiv. 16), and whom Christ would send to bear testimony to Himself in the world, by which He has been rejected. (John xv. 26 ; xvi. 8.)

Where the Spirit is viewed as coming to be with the disciples as the other Comforter, or Advocate (*παράκλητος*), He is said to come sent by the Father. When He is viewed as the divine Person on earth, to bear testimony of Christ to the world, He is said to come as sent by Christ from the Father. The Father would comfort His children deprived of the presence of the Lord. Christ, the eternal Son, would send the Holy Ghost to testify of Him by His presence, to the world which has rejected the Son of God.

Personally on earth, not only working here but dwelling here, He bears testimony, as Peter declared, to the crucified and now exalted One. (Acts v. 32.) Of the reality of His presence, and what it is to be where He dwells, the deaths of Ananias and Sapphira are a sad and solemn proof. (Acts v.) Here, because Christ has been

taken him. Jacob thought Joseph "was not," believing he was dead. The Holy Ghost never dwelt on earth as the third Person of the Godhead, till the Lord went on high.

rejected, His presence convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John xvi. 8-11); and He is the restraining power that hinders by His presence, as long as He shall be dwelling on earth, that full development of evil, the apostasy of Christendom, and of the mass of the Jews. (2 Thess. ii. 6.) For what withholdeth is both a power, τὸ κατέχον, and a person, ὁ κατέχων.

Next by His presence in and with the saints, the body of Christ is formed (1 Cor. xii. 13), and He makes them the dwelling-place, the house, and the temple of God. (Eph. ii. 22; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16.) As the Person of the Godhead on earth He directs as to the fields of labour (Acts viii. 29; x. ; xvi. 6, 7), and as to the instruments by whom the work is to be carried on (Acts xiii. 2, 4); the Lord Jesus Christ giving the people for the work (Eph. iv. 11), God assigning to each one his place in the assembly, and the Spirit qualifying each one for the service appointed for him. (1 Cor. xii. 28, 7.) He is then Sovereign in His acting, dividing to each as He will. He is always present in the assembly, viewed in its wider aspect of profession, and He directs and energises the saints, whether for service, or in worship (Phil. iii. 3); for He not only dwells in Christendom, but in the individual saint as well.

God then dwells now on earth, not as Jehovah

in the midst of Israel, not in the Person of the Lord Jesus, as was true whilst He was on earth, but in the Person of the Holy Ghost in the midst of those who bear Christ's name. By-and-by earth will, for a short time, be without any Person of the Godhead dwelling on it. Revelation vi.-xix. describes that time. But now God is here in His house, dwelling in it, but it is God the Holy Ghost. There is on earth the house, the temple of God; the assembly of God on earth being that house, that dwelling-place; and the truth of christian unity is practically exemplified by saints partaking together at the Lord's table of the one loaf. (1 Cor. x. 17.)

But He not only dwells in Christendom, He dwells in every real Christian as well. Hence our bodies are said to be temples, not of God, but of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19), God's gift to them that obey Him. (Acts v. 32.) Poured out by the Lord Jesus on the day of Pentecost, who has thus baptised with the Holy Ghost, as John the Baptist foretold (Matt. iii. 11; Acts i. 5, xi. 16), the Spirit is now given by God to every one who believes the gospel of our salvation. (Eph. i. 13.) By the Spirit we cry Abba Father (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6), knowing now our relationship to God as His children, and our position before Him (though not yet manifested) of sons. By the Spirit thus given us, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts to sustain us in trials

here (Rom. v. 5); and He is in us, and with us as the other Comforter, or Advocate, to intercede for us, when we know not what to ask, as we feel the sorrowful condition of creation weighed down by sin. (Rom. viii. 26, 27.)

As God's gift to us, He is the seal, the earnest, and the unction. (2 Cor. i. 21, 22.) As the seal He is God's mark on us that He owns us as His, to await the day of redemption. (Eph. i. 13, iv. 30.) As the earnest, by His presence in us, we are assured of the coming inheritance (Eph. i. 14), and of the full deliverance of our bodies from the fruits and presence of sin. (Rom. viii. 11, 23.) As the unction, we, having received Him, know all things, and are not to be dependent on human teachers, though always to be subject to apostolic teaching. (1 John ii. 20-27.)

Further as dwelling on earth in the church of God, He waits here with the bride for the coming of the Lord for His saints; hence He responds with the bride to the Lord's declaration that He is the bright and Morning Star by the one word "Come," addressed to Christ. Thus He immediately directs us to await the fulfilment of the church's special hope—the being caught up to meet the Lord in the air (Rev. xxii. 17; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17), to be taken out of this scene, on which divine judgment is to be poured before the Lord's second advent, that we may come with

Him when He comes to reign. What of all this was known in the last century? What of it was known at the commencement of the present century? How much of it is still unknown in many parts of Christendom!

In close connection with the church's special hope is what is called dispensational teaching, the distinguishing between those who had an earthly calling and those who have a heavenly calling—between kingdom truth and church truth. If we ignore dispensational teaching we cannot understand and interpret aright the sacred scriptures. Prophecy we shall not understand. The Psalms will in places be a riddle to us, for the language therein supplied by God through the Spirit for His saints to adopt, we must own is, at times, unsuited for us as Christians.

And we shall not without this teaching discern the great difference between Judaism and Christianity, the confounding together of which has been productive of so much evil in the church of God. Ritualism and legalism have their stronghold in this confusion. Now, together with the Holy Spirit's teaching, by which dispensational truth has been discerned afresh, the study of the word of God has been revived, and the distinctive teaching of the different parts of the divine word, and the outline, too, of books of scripture have been recovered for God's saints. Instead, for instance, of harmonising the Gospels, we have

learnt the importance both of viewing each Gospel in its distinctive character, and of tracing out the thread of each history of the life of the Lord on earth.

What a mass of teaching has been recovered through the goodness of our God ! Its effect has been seen in the restoration to its original simplicity of that eucharistic service, instituted by the Lord Jesus on the night before His cross ; in the gathering together of Christians on the broad, simple, and only scriptural ground of members of Christ, and children of God ; in the distinction seized and maintained between ministry and office in the church of God ; in an activity in teaching and preaching, with God's manifest blessing on both, unknown for centuries. And in the recovery of, and the proving the fulness of the divine word, and its suitability to guide God's saints, God's assembly, as is needed, have we not learned, in some measure, the freedom and power that can be enjoyed when the Spirit of God is unhindered in His actings in any company really gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and of what it is to have God in our midst ?

Now how was all this brought about ? The answer, we believe, is a most simple one. A few saints, guided of God, learned to give the Holy Ghost His place in their midst ; and as they were obedient to what they saw in the word, He,



ungrieved by them, was able to open up truth after truth, not by revealing anything afresh, but by shewing them in that word what had been so long forgotten of the doctrine of the apostles, and which is part of the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

C. E. S.

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You never get sanctification apart from the glory in which Christ is. God has set one single Man apart, so that I may know what sanctification is in this world; He has given me a model Man according to the Father's heart.

(J. N. D.)

## “HIS OWN WHICH WERE IN THE WORLD.” \*

EPHESIANS V. 26.

IN the preceding verse of this chapter we have what Christ did: “He loved the church, and gave himself for it.” In the verse we have read we have what He is doing now: “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” And in the following verse we have what is future: “That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

What I desire to bring before you, beloved brethren, is this: what is the present interest of our Lord Jesus Christ touching His own on the earth. You see I cannot possibly get the other side until I get this side. I cannot tell how I am to respond until I know what I am to respond to. We all know something of how He has loved us, but we do not so well know, we are not sufficiently occupied with, what is His present interest in the church, His present service and His present love. Here we find it in one little verse: “That he

\* This address, and the twelve following, at Quemerford, on June 8 and 9, 1882.

might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

I propose to turn to the gospel of John to see how the Lord opens out the nature of what we find stated as doctrine by Paul.

We will turn then to John xiii. It is interesting and important to remember that John was written after the failure had set in, yet the Lord puts on record what is in His heart towards His own on the earth. There is no thought of division, no thought of separation. If I look around now I have to see it; I have to see the ruin that all is in. But if I look up, I see what His heart is; and I am convinced that, if we understood that heart better in relation to His own upon earth, we should be largely affected by it.

Now my intention is to give a little view of chapters xiii. to xvii.; and, in what I say, I merely suggest for your own after study, for, as I often say, I find that suggestive teaching is the most helpful teaching. The Lord is always dealing with our souls, and when the heart has been exercised about some truth, He gives us help by the way, and everything that He gives us we trace back again to Himself; He uses us as deputies to carry out His own purposes.

As to these chapters, xiii. and xiv. are what I would term "within doors." It is not public; it is belonging to the assembly. Or rather, as I will only use the words that are given to us

in this scripture, I will not say “assembly,” but “*His own*.” He took His place at the supper table with His own. It is important thus to notice who are within doors. They are “His own.” There are three places in these chapters: within doors; without doors; and heaven. There is nothing to do with the world in the last. We get here the terminable and the interminable. Chapters xiii. to xvi. give us what is terminable, that which lasts for a time. In chapter xvii. we have that which is interminable, that which is not of time, which belongs to eternity.

I begin then with the fourth verse of chapter xiii., where we read the Lord rises from supper, and lays aside His garments. I lay great stress upon this, because supper is commemorative of an accomplished work; the atoning work is at an end. John xiii. is generally looked at as being relief to the conscience; the washing of the feet being supposed to be the setting aside of our sins. But I believe that it is an entirely new thing that is now introduced; it is not a question of sacrifice; it is an entirely new work which is introduced, consequent on the completion of the first work—the great work of redemption.

This new work is the washing of the feet. It is a work never found before in scripture. There were sacrifices and offerings, but nothing like this. Here, having loved His own that were in the world, He does a new thing for them—a

thing that we too may have a part in as His deputies. And what is the effect of this work? It is in order to restore communion with Himself while He is absent, otherwise "His own" would have "no part with me."

I believe that there is great deficiency amongst us on this point. I believe there is difficulty in understanding what communion is, because there is not that anxiety about it that characterised our early days. The very word itself is scarcely used now. We never hear of anything but "fellowship" now, where it used to be "communion." Now though "fellowship" and "communion" may be the same word in the original, they express two very different thoughts in English. I speak of it timidly, but I cannot but say that I regret that there is so little anxiety about communion. There is anxiety about work; there is anxiety also about walk; but I see very little about communion; and you may have both these without communion.

You may perhaps ask, Then do you object to my preaching about walk and work? Not at all; it may be very right to do so, but I say right things may be misplaced; and that which is very right, very praiseworthy, may be still out of place. There may be right things done which are not done in the right way; about which there is no communion—no having part with Him. Communion is taking the right step at

the right time in the right way, and perhaps only *one* step. It is only a gardener who can tell the difference at the first between a weed and a flower. An ordinary spectator might say, "The seeds are coming up very well; there will be a fine crop." "No," says the gardener; "they are weeds." So the spiritual man "discerneth all things." He knows which is the weed. I hope we are gathered together at this time to help one another; and to do this we must come close to the point.

The first thought that we find here is one which is calculated to touch every heart. The Lord says: I am going on high; and whilst leaving you down here, I have put you before my Father in the unclouded light of His presence, without a spot upon you. I leave you in a defiled scene, but such is my continuous affection for you, that I will make it my business to remove from you everything that might produce distance—everything that might cause reserve between you and me.

Then there must be intimacy first?

Yes; that is just what I am coming to. And I say it sorrowfully before the Lord, I believe that souls are *not* intimate with Him; there is not the sense of acquaintance. It is my unfeigned desire for souls that they might form acquaintance with the Lord. Many have no sense of reserve, because they have never been intimate. Joseph's brethren were living with him for seven-

teen years, recipients of his favour, and all the time they did not know him intimately.

But how may I become acquainted with Him?

I answer, that He is gone on high, and therefore there is no acquaintance with Him now but by the Holy Ghost. It is a wonderful moment to the soul when it first knows the blessed reality of acquaintance with the Lord. It may not be for years after conversion, but it is the grand characteristic of Christianity. Sacrifice was not a new thing for the Jews. They could accept without difficulty the fact that the Shepherd was to die, wonderful though it be. But that He should say, "I know my sheep and *am known of mine*," that is an entirely new thing; "as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father." There is the same character of intimacy between Himself and His people as between the Father and the Son.

Do I know this intimacy? If I do not know it, I do not know what it is to have a shade cast upon it. You cannot lose what you have never had; but the more intimate you are with any person, the more quickly you will discern the smallest shade of reserve, the least change of manner. Then do not talk about reserve until you know intimacy.

I would remind you that whilst the Lord never changes His love, He does change His manner. John fell at His feet when he saw

His eyes as a flame of fire : as much as to say, I do not know that aspect. We have to bear this in mind. To the saints we ought never to change our love ; but there are at times those with whom we can “have no company,” so that they “may be ashamed.”

And further : affection is not communion. Peter was full of affection, but he was not in communion, though he cast himself into the sea to go to Jesus.

But if I am thinking so much of the Lord's things and having part with Him, what about my own affairs ?

When I am near Him, I find, as the disciples did in John xxi., that He has unbounded forethought for me ; the dinner was ready : “A fire of coals, and fish laid thereon and bread.” As the little hymn says :

“Make you His service your delight,  
He'll make your wants His care.”

The more you are in communion with Him the more you will find out how He sympathises with you, and how in the smallest things He is thinking for you. The more His interests occupy your heart, the more He will surprise you as to the manner in which He thinks of yours.

As I have already said, fellowship and communion, though the same word in the original, do not convey the same thought to us. If you



ask me what I understand by communion, I answer, It is going in company with another's mind. Like a faithful dog following his master, nothing satisfies him but to go the road his master goes. If he loses him, how he will wheel about in every direction until he finds him again! Did you ever feel that you had lost the Lord? That you did not know which way He was gone? That you were off the line? Have you any anxiety as to this? A man may have many dogs, but they may not all know him. It is only those that know him that follow him. Are our hearts set upon the incomparable blessedness of such reciprocity?

The following chapter is quite a different thing. Whilst John xiii. separates us from the defilements of the world, John xiv. comforts us as we pass through the world. I divide the chapter into two parts, shewing out the double way in which the Lord comforts us as we pass through the world. He goes up to prepare a place for them. That ends at verse 14. Then the descending; He comes down to comfort them here, and whatsoever they shall ask, He will do.

Three things are brought out.

First: there is a place up there.

Second: He is the way to it up there.

Third: He makes known the Father who owns it.

Stephen is practically an illustration of this.

The Lord says, Keep your eye on me, and you know the way, the truth, and the life, the Owner of the place, the Father, and, as you are dependent on me, the power to take you up to it.

One word as to the power, and I speak it timidly, anxiously, I do not think we really understand what the good of union is. I do not look upon union as that which may be illustrated by an engine drawing carriages. That is *connection*, it is not *union*. What is the nature of union? I am united to the One who is the Son of God; I am a member of that body of which He is the Head. It is the most wonderful thing to be the smallest chip of this great wheel—to be the least little bit of it. John alone tells me the nature of it. But I am not so much speaking of the nature as of the effect of it—the power of it.

As to this the Lord says, “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” The Lord’s greatest work down here was to raise a man from the dead. But He says, “Greater works shall he do,” and “If ye shall ask *anything* in my name I will do it.” He is effecting a far greater thing for his own now than when He was here on earth. Stephen is not raised from the dead, but he is made superior to everything on earth; through the power of Christ by the Holy Ghost in him, he

risers above all the wickedness arrayed against him, and is superior to the power of death.

How little we have practically of this! Do we know the exceeding greatness of His power to make us superior to suffering? Do we overcome evil with good? Perhaps not able to be superior to an insult? You may suffer greatly, but is it to be an occasion for complaining, or for overcoming with good? Where is the power that works *in* us? Oh, you say, I thought it was *for* us? Not only! It says, He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." Seeing our ignorance is the great way to learn. It is well to say, I am not up to that, but I should like to be. It is well to get a sense of what we should be. Thus far is the *upward* side—the *power* side.

Now let us look for a moment at the *downward* side, which is *obedience*.

Verse 20 gives us the nature of the union. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." But I cannot think as I look round me and see, and hear, what goes on, I cannot think that we have grasped the fact of what it is to be united to Christ. The gospel places me in all the beauty of Christ, in the very place where I was estranged from God. I have exchanged the judgment of Adam for the blessedness of Christ.

That is the gospel. I am united to the Person who has effected this work for me. Do you mean linked to Him? No; but united to Him. That is the nature of the union.

Do we take in this wonderful verse? "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Christianity is not a thing that you can take in like a problem of Euclid. It is the opening out of what makes you feel that, however much you have seen, there is yet more to be acquired, there is a yet firmer grasp to be got of what you hold. I feel it is important to get a sense of the moral height of our position in Christ. The magnificence of the place we occupy on this earth might well fill our souls. We in Christ, and He in us. There will be a desperate climax of evil, so heading up as to enable man to say at last that he is independent of God; it is placing him on such a pinnacle of importance, that he will assume to dispense with God. Man is to be so self-cultured, so restrained, that he can avoid every vice, and be able to attain every virtue, and thus support the immense weight of importance that science will have conferred upon him. Self-culture is the great cry. But, thank God, the Christian has a divine moral elevation, which eclipses all that man is able to think or do; and no one can raise up a standard against this pretension of man, unless he knows this divine elevation; we

can never meet it, except as we eclipse it by the grandeur of the place, of the position, in Christ in which we are placed by the power of the Holy Ghost—the only power that can raise up a standard against it.

I can say very little of verse 21. It is wonderful, but I feel I know so little of it, that I attempt not to express it.

One verse more I would notice; the 26th, where we read of the Comforter, "Whom the Father will send in my name." We have lost too much the meaning of what is meant by "My name." I give it as a subject of meditation. This wonderful Guest, who has taken up His abode with me, comes in the name of my absent Lord. As if a friend should enter my house, saying, I come in the name of your father, who has died; I come to acquaint you with him, to speak to you of him. How should I receive and regard such a guest—one who can tell me of one so dear to my heart! But no human illustration can perfectly convey a divine reality.

We now, in chapter xv., leave the sacred enclosure—we are going out of doors; and out of doors the Lord takes the place of the vine. The words, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you," tell us the greatness of the place we are set in. Can we enter on this place?

Now what is the phase I occupy after we

come out of doors? I go out *for Him*; as a soldier comes forth from the barrack to stand on the battle-field. I have been well trained, well fed, well equipped; and in moral power I come forth to stand for my Lord.

What is the first and great characteristic of the battle-field? The twelfth verse gives it: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." And this calls out the enmity of the world. We begin here to display ourselves, and, from here, go out into the world and recruit for our corps as well as we can; but it is from this point we start. There is no such thing as ascending in goodness; there is descending. "Every good and perfect gift cometh down." You do not rise as a minister from the gospel to the church; but you do go out from the church to carry the gospel to the world. Evangelists are given from the Head; they come from above, to aid in effecting that grand work: gathering out a people for His name.

Have we all felt the force of that passage, "a people for his name"? We act sometimes as if we forgot that the Lord Jesus Christ is rejected from the earth; people speak as if the millennial day had come, and as if the living water had only to flow out, and heal wherever it flows. But this is not at all the character of the gospel now. The evangelist now has to search the world over for all that belongs to Christ,

as the woman swept the house, seeking the lost piece of silver. I want to bear a distinct witness to that wonderful secret of God, that, where Christ was refused bodily on earth, He *has* a body gathered by the gospel in the power of the Holy Ghost. He has called out a people to His name.

How were these people born? By the Holy Ghost. And what is their great characteristic? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The character of the servant as he comes into the world is this: That man would die for the saints. Then it is the world hates us. But we have lost this hatred in a great measure; we have made terms with the world. We have said to the world, You be civil to me, and I will be civil to you. This is the battle-field, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." He brings us into this place of intimacy; He makes us His friends; and therefore, He says, will the world hate you. He calls me to have Him as the distinct object of my affections; and thus shall I be separated from this scene.

Now mark verse 26: "But 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." It is to "testify of *me*," mind. The Holy Ghost, who in chapter xiv. is sent from the Father for

the comfort of His own on the earth, is now sent by Himself for this express purpose: to “testify of me.”

In chapter xvi., His own are out in testimony in the world, and the Holy Ghost is the One to support them in it. I only call attention to one verse in it, that is the twenty-third: “In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.” In all these chapters we get dependence on Him; we learn what the Lord’s heart is to His own, and the Holy Ghost is the power in each one. If we come out to fight for Him, He says, “Ye are my friends.” Can anything be greater! To be able to go out in the morning and say to myself, I am the friend of Christ! It is written of the wise woman, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.” So here the Lord says, I call you not servants, but friends; for a servant does not know what his lord does; but you do, for you have part with me; and “all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

Do you want me, then, to give up my business? No; I attend to it better than I ever did before;



just as the labouring man does not forget his family whilst he is at his work ; his very affection for them makes him a better workman. There is no fear but that the heart that is devoted to Christ will do his own business well. If I am in communion with Him I am sure to do the right thing ; the thing that He would like. I shall do the right thing in the right way. I shall take a long step if He likes it, and if He wishes, I take a short one. I have no rule about it at all, but the sense of His affection will lead me wherever His interests are.

I just turn to chapter xvii. to see what is interminable. This is not within doors, neither is it out of doors battling with this scene ; it is that which we have for eternity. He gives us eternal life, His words, divine intelligence. We may not be in the *enjoyment* of it all, but we *have* it. Then verse 17 is sanctification : "Sanctify them through thy truth : thy word is truth." It begins here, but it is interminable. "Sanctified thoroughly ;" we have not got that yet ; it will continue through all eternity. But it brings an immense fund of blessing to each one of us when we discover what Christ has in His heart for us. We have not come to the fulness of it yet, but it is an immense cheer to know it is a fact in His heart.

In verse 21 we have unity. "That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in

thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." When will that be? Is it now? If I look around I do not see it. But I know it *will* be—even *here*; it will be yet seen in all its wonderful and blessed reality, when the bride comes down from heaven in all the splendour of unbroken concord, the beautiful and perfect expression of Himself, to administer and set forth Christ in glory. Paul calls the church the "temple" in the future; but in John "*the bride*," is her one unmistakable characteristic; thorough identity of interest with her Lord.

We are to have the glory too, and that is eternal: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." And then He winds up with that wonderful verse, "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 have thus just run over the verses that they may strike chords in our hearts, which may elicit the response the Lord looks for. May all our hearts be more deeply versed in Christ's present thoughts as to His own on earth, for His name's sake.

(J. B. S.)

## THE SHEPHERD'S LOVE FOR THE SHEEP.

JOHN X. 37, 38.

THERE is another part of John's gospel that we may look at ; two verses in chapter x. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not ; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works : that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." And again, "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

We have been hearing something of Christ's *present* interest in the church on the earth. If we look a little at what is anterior to *this*, we get the infinite circle in which the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are, by divine counsel and operation, calling out the elect. In eternity the Father had His counsels as to these, and in a future day Christ will present to Himself the church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And in this period the operation of the Holy Ghost is in calling out and uniting to the Head in heaven the members of the body of Christ : they are "baptised by one Spirit into one body."

Let this marvellous fact that it was a purpose in the Father's counsels, take hold of us. It is blessed to go back there. I do not think we can ever be in our full and proper place as to communion, if we do not. Before ever there was a created light, God Himself dwelt in light, and that light was Christ. "Then was I by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." And so He asks, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the Son of God?"

It is our delight to take up from this height the way in which Christ introduced Himself, so that He might give life, eternal life, to as many as God the Father had given Him. Where are we as to it all? Not in the circle of this historical world; nor suited to the fall and ruin below; but left down here that we may shine as lights in it, holding forth the word of life; left here that we may be consistent with the place in which He has set us above, through the riches of His grace.

In this tenth chapter, the shepherd character of Christ is beautifully introduced in connection with the ninth; for suppose I am cast out by the authorities of to-day like this blind man was? I am only cast into the arms of Christ, the rejected One! And do not our hearts bound, as we hear the good Shepherd's words? It is impossible to be unmoved as we look at God thus sending

His Son into this world. We cannot be near His hand of power, without finding out His heart of love. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ.

And not only that; I get His care too—the Shepherd's watchful eye; His goodness and fostering care. I cannot protect myself; but I am responsible to hear the Shepherd's voice, and He protects me from every external foe. What a comfort and sustainment to hear Him say, "I know my sheep and am known of mine, as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father"! And then: "I and my Father are one." As it has been often said, we get here the double interest that is taken in the sheep—the interest of the Father and of the Son. The Father loved the sheep, and gave them to the Son. The Son loved the sheep, and laid down His life for them. What counsels are these! and before the world even was! Take away the Shepherd, and *that* oneness cannot be manifested. The blind man in this intimacy with Jesus, goes forth with the confession that He *must* be the Son of God. He said, Lord, I believe, and worshipped Him.

Well, it is all very familiar to most, so I pass on to another text. When Christ had to defend Himself from the charge they brought against Him—when they said "Thou blasphemest," He simply answered: "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye

believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him." And so in the present day. If truth connects us with the person of Christ and the true confession of His glory, we shall certainly have to meet the enmity of the world, and then we have nothing to do but to submit to reproach and rejection with Him, for the testimony of our Lord.

The Father sent the Son to gather out the sheep, these beautiful sheep white from the washing, and not a spot upon them as He sees them, brought up by the Shepherd.

I would just like to add, for another purpose, that many years ago at Plymouth I was visiting a brother who was ill, and had a paralytic stroke, which gave occasion for the hymn we sometimes sing, "Not a cloud above, not a spot within." I said to him, "Skelton, how are you?" and looking upwards he answered, "Oh! not a cloud above, not a spot within;" and trying to raise his poor palsied arm, said, "Ah 'sir, he will do no more mischief." A proof that though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. Our losses are our gains, in this school of God, and come out in a psalm.

I will also add one word on chapter xvii. which has already occupied us. The Lord says: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from

the evil." This is what the Son says to the Father, after He had perfectly fulfilled the work that had been given Him to do, and on putting us back into the hand of His "Holy Father" to be kept.

This chapter is to me the great basis of divine responsibility. The Lord says: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This is the acquittal and seal of all responsibility as to what God required. Everything that God claimed is brought out and fulfilled up to the height of the glory of God Himself. So it says, at that hour "*Jesus* lifted up his eyes to heaven and said . . . Thou hast given him power." Power for what? "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." But what is this eternal life? "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom thou hast sent." And he adds: "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." He has acquitted Himself of the infinite responsibility that hung upon Him. He has done these two mighty things: glorified God on the earth, and finished the work He gave Him to do. There is nothing that gives this fallen creation its true charm, except as you connect it with what Christ

was in it in His life, and ways, and walk. His delight was to glorify His Father, and to finish His work by death and resurrection on high. He has acquitted Himself of all the responsibilities that hung upon Him, and the Father has begun to glorify the Son, by exalting Him at His right hand in the heavens.

In verse six He says: "I have manifested thy name." What name? Do not think you have got to the marrow and fatness of a single name or glory of the Father, or of Christ as yet. *Dwell* upon it, under the anointing of the Holy Ghost, that He may open it out to you. "I have manifested *thy name*." Think of the mission of the Son. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"—that wonderful mission which reveals the Father. He says to Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father?" "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." Who beheld that glory? "*We*" beheld it! He had glorified the Father on the earth; He had gone about glorifying Him every day; every step He took God was with Him. Think of it! Anterior to the calling out of the church, God was with



*man* upon the earth; and it was this very Man (the Son) who has glorified God!

Again, as to sanctification He says: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth . . . . And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Thus our sanctification is connected with Christ Himself. Never separate truth, any one truth, from Christ. If it is a question of access to God, He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." How easily our lips may utter a verse like this, but not attempt to *weigh* it in the Holiest, where God dwells! He was the revelation of the Father; in Him the Father was seen opening out His heart. What was in the bosom of that love? This Son! And *He* came "to seek and to save that which was lost," and to make that which was lost familiar with Himself. At the cross of Christ I learn how I want *all* that Christ was, whether in life or in death. I want His life for living to God, and I want His death for what I was as a sinful man. I want His death for communion and boldness before God too; God's righteousness, His holiness as to sin, His love, His mercy, the very attributes of God are all glorified by that blessed One upon the cross. He says, I can bring holiness and sin together in myself on the cross, but not to *reconcile* them; that could not be. The

Son has accomplished His mission on the earth : He has opened the Father's house to the sons of God, as He says in chapter xiv.; and now He adds, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." He first overcomes the world for Himself, and for His people, and then He goes out of the world and sets Himself apart for our sakes.

Time would fail me to say anything about the consequent mission of the Holy Ghost ; I only mention further that we get the mission of the Son in the first part of this Gospel, and the mission of the Holy Ghost in the middle. And *what* a mission ! We are brought into the blessedness of the Father's love and the Father's house by the Son, if we follow the first part of the Gospel ; and we get the Father and the Son having communion with us by the Spirit as the Comforter if we follow the last. Chapter xiii. opens with "Part with *me*" where Christ now is. I do not believe you can emphasise it too much. He goes to the Father ; all things are His ; and He sends the Holy Ghost down to His own, who are in this world.

The first object of the Holy Ghost's mission is, however, to glorify Christ. Whatever else He may do, God must have Christ glorified, and that by a competent witness, and on the *earth* too. Do not talk to me for the moment of the solar system ; it is nothing to us, in the light of these heavenly glories, whether the earth

goes round the sun, or the sun round the earth. I know another system altogether, one of which God's Son is the centre; one in which, though He can charge His angels with folly, He cannot charge His saints with sin! It is impossible that He should. This is the new stand point of the risen, blessed, glorified, Christ, with whom we are, by grace and glory, one!

Here we can join on to that of which our brother has been speaking to us, and can see how the Holy Ghost carries on His present mission. He gathers together the members of Christ, purchased and redeemed by the blood of the cross, He baptises them into one body of which Christ is the Head, and He takes of mine, as Jesus said, and shews it unto you. Thus are carried out upon the earth the purposes of God, as to a people for His name before even the world was, and thus comes out the glory of the person of the One whose work has brought us into all these counsels of God for His Son's glory, which were and are from everlasting to everlasting. Well may Paul pray "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

(J. E. B.)

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## “I IN YOU, AND YE IN ME.”

JOHN XIV. 20.

Now we all own that that day is come, but have we got hold of the power of it for ourselves? I do not mean the understanding of it in the head, but the depths of it in the soul. The Lord says it is something His disciples should know in that day—the day when the Holy Ghost should be here. And I ask, have you and I really got hold of what He is speaking of? God has provided all that is necessary to our knowing it. The Holy Ghost is here, sent from the Father by the Son; and I suppose every one of us professes to be a recipient of the Holy Ghost. Have we then got hold of the practical teaching of these words? have we any sense of it, however feeble?

“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

Now, what are the thoughts that arise in our minds when we look at a scripture like this? It has to do, of course, with the coming of the Holy Ghost. And by His coming the Lord gives His people to understand that He is in the Father, and we in Him, and He in us.

First then, He is in the Father. This is a wonderful thing. Have we got hold of the deep teaching there is in it?

But next, we are in Christ and Christ in us, if we are Christians at all. We cannot turn aside the edge of a scripture like this. What do we understand by it? It is a most heart-searching truth. Do we respond in any faint degree to these desires of Christ for His people? Are we practically seeking to own what He here speaks of? In such days as these we need to have these words deeply rooted in our hearts.

Now what should they be to us? How should you and I be expressing them in our lives? "In that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." How shall we shew that we have this? As I have said, it is true of every Christian, and do we desire to enter into it as that which is to characterise us as we walk through this world?

We are told in the epistle to the Romans, that we have "Received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." And "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Thus it is distinctive Christian truth, that we are in Christ, and Christ is in us

otherwise we are "None of his." Now are we setting forth before others that we have learned this truth in any degree?

We will just take up another thought in Romans about it; for we find in this epistle what leads us on to John xiv. It is Christ risen—Christ in resurrection, who must be before the soul. The apostle begins with the soul at a distance from God; but it does not profit to occupy the soul with itself, and he passes on to what Christ has done for us, and brings out His work as the perfect answer to every charge that is against us. And we may still with profit dwell upon these first truths of Christianity, for the more advanced we are in Christian life the more are we willing to own how little we know of it, how little we shew forth the power of it in our walk.

Here the apostle, after speaking in chapter v. of the two races, brings in the blessed truth, that if I am in Christ, it is in Christ who has died, in Christ who is risen, and that I have to learn that the condition of Christ, as regards sin, is my condition because I am *in Him*. We are to "Reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ." "In Christ" comes in thus rather suddenly in chapter vi., where it is brought forward for the first time in this epistle.

What then is my condition as to sin? What

do I learn as to it here? It is not *dying* to sin. Christ is not *going* to die; Christ *has* died. And if I am "*in Christ*" I have, as regards myself, died indeed unto sin, and I am alive to God. For I am not only in a Christ who has *died*, but in a Christ who has *risen*, and His condition as regards sin is mine. So that it is plain I *have died* to sin—not I *am dying* to it.

Again in Colossians we read: "Wherefore, if ye *have died* with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" And, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." *How* have I thus died to sin, and from the elements of the world? Because I am *in Christ*—in Him *risen*.

Then the other side of the truth is that Christ is in us. And I ask what manner of people, not *ought* we to be, but *should* we be if we are carrying out this truth? What should we be before the world? We should certainly not be carried away by the current of what is around us. The only standard that I can find for my walk in this world is Christ. As I really own that I am in Him, shall I walk worthy of Him.

Now how are we in Christ? It is important to get clear, simple thoughts of Scripture. If we

turn to Romans viii. we read: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Thus a man is none of Christ's, that is, he is not in Christ, without the Holy Ghost. As we read in John: "*In that day* ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." It is by the Holy Ghost. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin: but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The Holy Ghost has come to us, consequent on the Lord's going on high; by Him we are united to Christ; by Him we are set in Christ, and Christ in us; by Him you and I are brought into this wonderful condition. If the Holy Ghost dwells in us, we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and we must not say that we have not the power to carry it out in our lives. God does not tell us to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin in our *own* strength, but as, in *Christ*."

In this chapter of John, the Lord tells us that the Holy Ghost "*in that day*" should dwell in the believer. In Romans viii. the apostle tells us that, if we have not the Holy Ghost, we do not belong to Christ at all; but that, if we have, the body is dead because of sin, and the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Thus we are given the power to carry it out. And I ask again, how far *are* we carrying out this truth that Christ is in us, and we in Christ?



## CHRIST OUR WISDOM.

1 CORINTHIANS II. 12-16.

I HAVE been asking myself a little whilst we have been together, how the truths that have been brought before us by the Spirit of God both this morning and this afternoon might be practically wrought out in our souls. I am sure we all know, each for ourselves, how many hindrances there are to prevent our true enjoyment of them, though hindrances are not enough to *excuse* our not enjoying them. We know a little what the flesh in us is, and we are not ignorant of the varied ways in which Satan works to prevent these blessed truths having their true expression in our lives. So that, with all this against us, it surely is not enough to have a mere knowledge of them in our heads.

I have been asking *myself* as to these things, therefore I trust I do not speak in any judging or unexercised spirit here about it; and I feel it is a question that we do well to consider, so that our coming together may not be unprofit-

able, but that we may go away with a deep sense of the responsibility connected with the place God has set us in; that, through His grace, our souls may be truly exercised as to it in His presence, and that the reality of this may be manifested in our walk and ways.

We all need to enter more into the great truth of what a Christian *is*; I do not say of what he *ought to be*. Not that we shall ever learn it from any experience of our own; it can only be from the deep grace of God displayed and known in our souls. But I believe that if we were to think more of what, through the deep infinite grace of God, we really *are*, it would have a great practical effect upon our souls, and we should in some measure seek to answer to it.

In this Epistle to the Corinthians, as we all know, there was great allowance of the flesh spoken of as amongst them. I have read these verses from it because in them the apostle brings before us this simple fact, that all human wisdom and all human power must be set aside in the things of God. If I were to go away from these meetings with the thought that *I* was competent to take up and use the truths that have been brought before us, I am quite sure that I should make a miserable failure of it directly.

This is just what the Corinthians did; and thinking themselves able as men to deal with what God had enriched them with, they *did* make a

miserable failure of the richest endowments the church had. Why? Simply because, as our brother was saying, they had not practical hold of the truth. It is not enough to know the truth; they knew it; it must be a practical power in our souls. They knew the truth of the cross of Christ; but, though the apostle had preached to them, and that not with excellency of speech, or enticing words of man's wisdom, "Jesus Christ, and him crucified," yet it had not been a practical thing with them; they did not know that "Jesus Christ and him crucified" puts to silence every single thing that is of the flesh.

In the second place, we read that the believer *has*, not *ought to have*, the mind of Christ. As it says in the first chapter: "Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." There is the setting aside by God of self in every form as to the first man. The apostle brings all this before them, he establishes them, so to speak, in their position before God, he dwells upon what they *are*, before he begins to speak to them about their conduct, or to dwell upon what they are *allowing*. Then he can press upon them that, whilst they *have* the mind of Christ, whilst they *have* Him as wisdom, they are *allowing* the intelligence of the first Adam to come out in their ways.

What we need is not merely to have the cross before us, as that which has procured us the for-

givenness of sins, and which has brought us to God; we need to realise that, in it, the first man has been set aside. The natural man cannot understand the things of God, and must be set aside, as must the carnal man, which we find in the next chapter, and which walks after the flesh.

There is then this great truth for every believer who has received the Spirit of God: he has "the mind of Christ." Are we bringing that mind to bear upon the things of God? God has made Christ unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." *He* has thus put aside the first man altogether and has brought in Christ. And I ask: Am I low enough, am I foolish enough, can I take the place of a fool, can I give up all my wisdom, can I allow that all mere human intelligence has been blown upon by the cross of Christ? As the apostle says: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." And "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

One is glad when one thinks of what an exchange one has made: that the blessed Lord Jesus, who knew no sin, has been made sin for us, and that, coming to God through Him, I am made God's righteousness in Him. I say this is wonderful when I dwell on it. But am I equally con-

tent day by day, because of this, to bring in the sentence of death upon everything for which He died here? Am I content to be a fool for Christ's sake? Am I content to take the place of being nothing in myself, of having no wisdom of my own, of having Christ made to me *of God* wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption?

Thus can we be taught, by the Holy Ghost, *the hidden wisdom of God*, ordained before the world to our glory, which no powers of nature can grasp, ("for eye hath not seen nor ear heard") but which God's Spirit alone can unfold, because in it are "the deep things of God," while nature can only know "the things of a man."

Oh, how wonderful to be fools for Christ's sake! To have the cross writing the sentence of death upon everything here, so that Christ may be all to us! I am persuaded that, if we could only be content to take this low place, if we were day by day living up to it, putting aside self, and refusing all that is of the first man, we should find this our great joy, that Christ was everything to us. We should not then seek to bring our own wisdom to bear on this or that. If I am to get up in the morning and live a little for Christ through the day, then all my springs must be in God. Is there to be a little bit of allowance in me of that for which Christ died? No. Christ cannot be carried out in my walk and ways if

self is not judged and set aside by His cross, so that He may be practically made righteousness to me.

What we surely all desire for one another is, that we may know better how to accept the cross of Christ as the end of ourselves ; how to be fools for Christ's sake ; and how to be little in our own eyes, so that Christ may be our wisdom, our strength, our all. Thus may we be able to carry out, in the power of the Spirit, what God has given us in Christ while we sojourn here.

(T. H. R.)

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## THE EFFECT OF LIGHT.

REVELATION I. 10-20.

I DESIRE to say one word, which is, that whilst we dwell on the *love* of Christ, as we have been doing, we must not forget the *jealousy* of Christ. The greater the love, the greater the jealousy, if any cause is given to raise it; as it says, "Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."

Think of the Lord as we have seen Him in John's Gospel, and now see His aspect here. Instead of being girded with a towel, washing His disciples' feet, He is now girded with a golden girdle. He is no longer serving, He is inspecting; His whole appearance is changed; as if the father of a family came to his house, and found everything in disorder. I ask you, I ask myself, how does the *Lord* view things? We may be glad for a moment to get aside into a quiet nook, into a happy little meeting such as this, and talk together of His love, but we must not forget that

He is light as well as love, and practically the light is left out when we dwell only upon the love.

Here His eyes are "as a flame of fire." It is light here, not love. He is throwing light upon the whole state of things in the church. And it is remarkable, that when you get near the Lord, and are prospering in soul, He makes revelations to you that surprise you. Also you discover things in yourself that you never thought were there; just as Ishmael had been in Abraham's house for years, but was revealed in a festive moment. So, when we get near the Lord, we discover the Ishmaels, the dark spots, the things that hinder the working of divine grace in our souls.

Now it is what is interior that is the question. People sometimes wonder that there is not a more beautiful exterior, but I say it is the interior that is at fault. The Pharisee, who was all for what was external, when the Lord spoke of the body of light, answered by asking Him to dine with him, as if to say, That is just what I hold. No, says the Lord, you only clean the outside, while the inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

You get the principle often in Scripture. As I have said, when Abraham made a feast for Isaac, the real character of Ishmael comes out. In that festive moment the flaw is discovered. He had been fourteen years in the house, but he had



never been found out before; and then the one who had a hand in bringing him in, was the one who asked to put him out. Sarah says, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." The apostle Paul interprets it. He says, "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." The moment that Christ takes His true place in the heart, the opposition of the flesh is detected. It is His coronation-day in the soul; it is a new sense to the soul; He is enthroned in my heart, and I can no longer tolerate the flesh. It must be, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

Again, take Jacob in Syria. He is there for twenty years, and when at last God brings him back again to the land, he pitches at Shalem. There he falls to the level of the earthly man; he builds an altar—*my* altar. He gives up the testimony, and he suffers for it. The next thing we hear of him is, that he is afraid to dwell there, for fear of being destroyed, he and his house. Be sure of this, that if you get down to the level of the world, you will never escape out of it without suffering. Lot *lost* his daughters, who were married, in Sodom. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an altar unto God;" there Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, dies, and the last link with his mother is broken.

There is one thing about darkness, you can never convert it into light; you must increase the light, until it drives away the darkness. In the scripture we are looking at, the light is coming in to detect the darkness; for though the Lord never changes His love, He does change His manner. He loved Martha; He even puts her name first; but He treats her quite differently to Mary. He had called Moses to the work, but when he was on his road to fulfil the service, God sought to slay him. Why? Because he had not circumcised his son. The light shone upon his ways.

If you get near God, you will find the hidden flaw exposed. Do you know your dark spot? It is no small matter to bring the light in upon it. It is always working to the surface, always starting up afresh; but when light comes in, it disappears, and the wonderful beauty of Christ is transmitted to you. There is no part dark, but "the whole luminous, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give its glare." It is moral influence, without saying a word; like a wife with her husband, he may "be won;" he will not *hear*, but he *sees* the beautiful effect of the word. You come forth like a jasper stone, "a stone most precious;" and this you can be already.

We need to study more the heart of the Lord, as we get it in John xvii., where, addressing the Father, He expresses His desires for His own who

are in the world. Here, in this scene of the marred candlestick, the bride will come out resplendent with beauty, not a characteristic of Christ wanting to her; as you get it in Proverbs: the result of the wise woman's work and activity is, that her husband may be known in the gates. She does all the work, and he gets all the credit.

Do you go about this world with the sense of how the Lord feels things? What does He think of it all? It is often said, He will set it all right when He comes; but the question is, what are you going to do in the meantime? Surely I am going to act according to His pleasure.

Of these seven churches, there are two that are not under any censure, Smyrna and Philadelphia; and to Smyrna He appears in the same aspect as He does to John, for they were faithful. Four of them run on to the end. I see that to the last there is a faithful company remains, and that is a great comfort to me. Oh, but do you say that you are in it? I answer, I am earnestly going in for it; anyhow, I would not go in for any other; I will not go in for Thyatira, for example. I thank God He *has* it, and I am going in for it. How will you find it? Well, there were seven thousand in Elijah's day who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and of whom he knew nothing, but I have a certain way of discovering this company: in communion with the Lord, and in company with the Holy Ghost, I look to find

out where Christ's interests lie on this earth, and there I take my place.

I find there are three classes of Christians in the present day. The first is marked by affection. They are occupied with their affections, and their theme is that which produces them. And these people are never at rest—they are self-occupied though devoted. The second class is occupied with association with Christ; they are like people scaling heaven. They, too, are never satisfied; one day up, another down; they never get to the height they desire. The third class is occupied with Christ's interests here on earth, the true mark and simple consequence of union with Him. There is no effort about it; you do not even make the thing prominent; you are not thinking of what you can render, but you cannot think of anything else. It is just the difference between the two alabaster boxes. In Luke vii. it was display—not intentional display; but it was in the Pharisee's house, and in the presence of all gathered there; it was for a living Christ. But in John xii. it was for His burial; she did it to gratify her own heart; if He died, there was nothing here to command her; and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Men will spend their property, will go to great cost, and thus make great impressions on the minds of others; but there are things to give up that no one can recognise, that only the Lord can

see, that only He can interpret. I do not see any one gain from the Lord, unless he is on the losing side as to himself. Those who are on the gaining side for self, are not advancing in the things of God. If not practically suffering for Christ, if going in for enjoyment here, you are more like Jonathan than like Ruth. Many a man will sacrifice property for Christ, who will shrink from suffering for Him.

The aspect in which the Lord presents Himself to Philadelphia is not found at all in chapter i. It is an encouraging aspect; there is nothing inquisitorial about it; it is power connected with holiness and truth. There is no "and" there; it is what I call a cumulative process.

It is a great cheer to my soul that the Lord has a faithful company going on to the end. He sets an open door before them, which is what He did for David. In the time of his weakness God brought the priest to him, and the mighty men. I believe that where the greatest opposition and trial have been, there the greatest blessing will be. It is there God makes an open door. In the brightest moment of the church Barnabas broke down. No doubt he came back again, but for the moment he broke down. But in the very next chapter Paul gets the right man for the right work; he gets Timothy; the lack is supplied. This is what I call an open door. If Barnabas moves off, the Lord brings in Timothy.

The Lord grant we may have more simple faith in Himself, and more devotedness of heart to be occupied with His service, for His name's sake.

(J. B. S.)

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## GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE WILDERNESS.

HEBREWS IV. 9-16.

I TURN to this chapter as shewing us, not only the painstaking of God's interest in us and care for us, but also that that interest is taken in us by One who knows the path we are treading. He has trodden it Himself; and so it leads our hearts to quietly rest in Him and wait on Him, who has our interests so thoroughly at heart.

We were looking at John xiii. There the dealing of the Lord with souls is restorative. Here it is more preventive, and in the shape of establishing our souls in the fact that there is a rest remaining for us, a rest that never can be broken in upon, and that He has made provision for carrying us on safely until we reach it.

When we know what we meet in this world, and what we are in ourselves, how fearful the heart becomes; and it only finds the answer to these fears in turning to Him whose grace has anticipated and fully met them. How blessed to know then that there is not only a rest, but a

rest that cannot be broken in upon, and that is reserved for us! And we rejoice too in the thought of God then having everything suited to Himself; it is not only *our* rest; it is the rest of *God*.

Now, through grace, we enjoy rest of conscience and rest of heart in Christ; He comes to us with both even here; but it is rest *in Christ*, not in anything that is around us. He does not promise to us rest in *that*. But the moment I look upward I say, I can rest entirely *there*. Here, with any loved earthly object, the thought forces itself in, something may come to take this away from me; my joy is a thing that I may lose to-morrow. But the painstaking of the grace of God is to establish the hearts of weak and feeble ones in the blessed fact, that there is a rest remaining there that cannot be broken in upon. He first removes any difficulties from their minds as to the rest having been given them already, and then shews that there *is* a rest that *remaineth* for the people of God.

One meets saints of God who have a thought: Well, things are not very straight here, but it will be all right one day when we get up there. Though this may be in a certain sense true, it is not enough, at least not if it is used to bring in a thought of indifference as to the present moment. God would teach us the importance of the present time, and to appreciate the provision that He has made for us in it. There is the grace of the Lord



which we are called to lay hold upon *now*. It is the tendency of our hearts to try to get out of the circumstances we are in; to hope for some change that will carry us into some path easier to nature than the one we are placed in, instead of making use of God's grace to enable us to walk where we are so as to please Him. Of course I am not speaking of wrong circumstances: if we are in such, the only thing is to look to God to deliver us out of them at once.

Now in the verses we have read, the Lord's interest in us is shewn. He has not only established us in the sense of His favour as to the forgiveness of our sins, and the knowledge that a rest, God's rest, is remaining for us at the end of our course; but it is also not a matter of indifference to God how we go on until we get to that rest. So the apostle says: "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

Directly we accept this truth what is the effect of it on our souls? The heart is inclined to answer, Who could maintain that standard in the midst of such circumstances as these? And then

the tendency is to lower the standard as to what God expects of His people, because of the difficulties of the way. But I repeat, that the first thing is to get real hold of the greatness of this grace of God wherein we stand; and then I say, I so well understand His grace that I can welcome this statement that His word is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," and that "all things are naked and opened" unto His eyes. Do you think I can welcome such words unless I understand His grace? When I have the sense that God is watching every step of my path, the tendency is to say, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

But God knows what my need, what my feebleness, is. And the next thing I get is the sense that there is One living at God's right hand for me, One who is interested in me, One whose strength meets my feebleness, so that I can welcome this dealing of God's which has everything out with me. He gives me God's thoughts about me, but I do not seek to get away from Him, because it is His grace that detains me in His presence, whilst He has it all out with me.

He knows exactly where we are, and what we are passing through; and He is not one who underrates the difficulties of the way. We know what it is in trial if any one comes to sympathise with us who cannot adequately enter into our

feelings; but it is never thus with the Lord. He enters fully into the very depths of our sorrows. Our great High Priest is on "the throne of grace." How well He knows what suits me! How perfectly He enters into my need! Does not each one of our hearts say, as He ministers to us His sympathy and power: That comes from One who understands me—from One who knows all about me?

Have you not ever been struck by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple? As you dwell upon it you get the sense, that here is a man who feels that the greatest good he can desire for his people is that they may find that God has an ear for them. And when you turn to Psalm cvii. as you read it you acknowledge how right Solomon was; and that he estimated truly when he judged that when men were in difficulties their greatest boon would be to have God's ear; that when they should cry unto the Lord He would deliver them and save them out of their distresses. The subject of Solomon's prayer is this: that man's greatest blessing consists in being connected with the greatness of God; and that their greatest boon is for God to give them the assurance that they have His ear.

And to Solomon He even more than answers his prayer. He goes far beyond it. Solomon prays that God's "eyes may be open toward this house night and day." God answers: "Mine eyes

and my *heart* shall be there *continually*." Is not that a wonderful answer? When in their difficulties, in their trials; when even in the consciousness that their own folly had brought them into the straits they were in; yet might they turn to Him whose eyes and whose heart would be there continually.

And do not our hearts confess that the greatest boon God can give us down here, is the consciousness that, in all that we pass through, we have His ear? God's thought is first to establish us in grace, and then to bring in that which should make all things naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom *we have to do*. What a word for us! Have we the sense day by day and hour by hour that we have to do with God? How simple it makes things, and yet how serious!

Just notice in Hebrews xii. the number of ways in which the grace of Christ comes into the heart. How it points out one thing after another! Notice the number of arguments that God brings to bear on the hearts of those who were ready to turn aside. What were their difficulties? Well, they had come out from Judaism with expectations savouring rather of the kingdom and glory than of the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. They expected to find in their present association with Christ a path on earth which they did not realise and so they were disappointed, discouraged, because of the way—hesitating in their steps, and

questioning in their hearts, if the path they were treading was of God, and ready to turn back. God sees what a dangerous moment it is for them: the moment of hesitancy and of being cast down, and how the enemy watched for it. See how beautifully he brings in Esau; just at the very moment when his history would be a warning to them.

How does He warn them? Well, the question is: Under what circumstances was it that Esau sold his birthright? It was in a moment of pressure and weariness; he says, "I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" and he goes in for the present. A mess of pottage found him in these circumstances, and he takes it. Now remember Esau, says the apostle; look what happened then in a time of weakness and hesitancy, and take warning. And for your encouragement you have not come to mount Sinai, the place of law, but to mount Zion, the place where grace was brought in. And is grace brought in in a way that makes us indifferent as to our path here? Not at all. It is "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." Is this being indifferent or careless?

This is a test to many souls. They do not like the thought of God being a consuming fire,

and they say, "Oh, that is God out of Christ." It is not at all; it is "our God." God is holy, and He will have His people "partakers of his holiness." In Leviticus ix. 24, the holiness of God accepts by fire what they had done; but in Leviticus x. 2, the same holiness refuses by fire the presumption that disregards its claims. God is holy, and God ever remains the same; and thank God that He does. He never changes in His love for us, and it is also an immense mercy that He never changes in His holiness.

And He knows how to bring Himself before us maintaining both these scriptures. He separated Moses to His service when He sent him to be the deliverer of Israel from the burning bush. That was to be the aspect of God's holiness that was to be engraved upon his soul in his service. But if I am not established in grace, it is not a bit of comfort to me, but the reverse, that God has His eye upon me, and is winnowing my path as I go along down here. I shall be like Jonah: I shall seek to flee from God's presence. He knew that his prophetic character would go, and that he should be made small before the Ninevites. But you know his history, and how God had to have His own way with him to get him back to the true path, and to bring him to the point of saying, No one will do for me but God; "Salvation is of the Lord."

If we have to do with this wonderful grace of

God we can welcome the fact that everything about us is open to the eye of God. When David hears God's words of grace he goes in and sits before the Lord, and that forms his prayer. God had revealed wonderful things to him and he says, "*Therefore* hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." Who taught him his prayer? It was as he heard God pour out His heart in blessing for David, that David's heart answered to God's. And that is what true prayer is.

God does not underrate our difficulties; and He does not overrate our strength; He does not take us to be what we are not. But as we face the gravity of what it is to be down here, we find the provision that God has made for us to go through it. I cannot do without drawing upon all this grace. There is no superfluous provision made. The question is: Are we willing to put ourselves in God's hands, and ask Him to have His own way with us? We are not called to anything that God does not give us grace to walk in. Are we ready to say with Peter, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water?" and are we prepared to hear Him say "*Come*"? The only "if" in the question was "*if* it be thou." Our poor hearts have fifty other ifs; but the only one for the true heart is "*if* it be *thou*." And He said, *Come*.

Any really seeking to follow the Lord must

expect Him to say, Come. It hangs not on anything in ourselves; it is all on that one "if" and His word "Come." And it is not to take one or two steps, and then to sink. No; we are to go on. Why did Peter sink? Because evidently there was lurking in his heart the thought: Ah, Peter, here you are walking on the water! Can a man go quietly on walking on the water? quietly maintaining amid adverse surroundings what is for the Lord? Provision has been made for our doing so by One who knows all that is around us.

Now if these things are true, if this painstaking provision and love are true, what should be the effect upon us? That of leaving us without excuse. There is not an atom of excuse for us. Do you think there was any excuse for Peter sinking?

I was thankful for what was said this morning as to suggestive teaching; and I look at this subject in that suggestive way, desiring that God's grace may lead our hearts on into the consideration of his care for us by the way; into a deeper understanding of that grace which has made such full provision for our need and weakness, that we are able to go on unmoved through all the difficulties and trials of the way, counting upon His care and love to us in Christ.

(J. B.)



## THE TESTIMONY COMMITTED TO MAN.

JOHN XVI. 26, 27.

I NEED hardly make any excuse for myself in bringing this subject before you. I believe I can trace all the divisions in the present day to simple ignorance of what the testimony is.

God has always had a distinct course of action. I might illustrate what I mean by the trade winds, a natural fact, I suppose, familiar to every school boy. A sailor once told me that he had been in sight of the trade winds seven weeks, and yet could not get into them. He was becalmed just outside their influence. A calm is produced by the action of two winds one against the other, when the force of each is neutralised. I believe spiritually many are there. If we are in the testimony, we are in the sphere where the whole force of God's Spirit is in operation. And if we are out of it, we lack power. We lose everything if we are not in communion with the Lord as to His present course of action on earth. All is in abeyance; we are becalmed, and make no progress.

The testimony begins with the call of Abram.

I count four distinct testimonies. I believe the first began with Genesis xii. Mark the circumstances under which it began. God had set up man afresh on the earth after the flood. It was a special thing with Noah. God set man up at that time under a new covenant. Now when God makes a covenant with man, all man has to do is to submit to it, he is to have no will in the matter. But man set about building a tower in simple defiance of God. And from that Babylon sprang. Babylon is the world's future; there, everything gives place to enjoyment; everything yields to the pleasures of the senses. I may say indeed that it began with Eve. Eve was a woman of taste; she was æsthetic; she saw that the fruit was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and that which would make one wise; she was intellectual. And thus came in the exaltation of man; he turns his back upon God, and counts himself quite able to get on without Him. All this comes out in manifest form in the tower of Babel. Conversion is just the opposite of all this. I turn my eyes to God, and my back upon all that is of man.

And now comes out election for the first time. Abram is called to get out of his country and kindred and father's house, and "he went out, not knowing whither he went." This was the great characteristic of the testimony at that time; and

we must not lose sight of this first moral feature, for the final testimony embraces all the former testimonies. You do not lose a moral feature of them.

Abram then comes out, counting simply on God. He leaves the land of Shinar, mark you. He turns his back upon the city of man's creation—that city which foreshadowed what will yet be accomplished by man on earth, and he looked for “a city whose builder and maker is God.” I am sure you will not be surprised if I say that that city is the New Jerusalem. He left Babylon. He turned his eye in dependence on God, and looked for that city which would shew forth Christ's glories upon earth. Wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God.

Now as long as he kept to this path God supported him in it. But famine came, and he went down to Egypt. He got out of the testimony. We always lose the best thing we know, if we are not in communion. Still there is restoring grace, and Abram comes back again to the land.

If we pass on now to chapter xiii. 14, we read, “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.” Here we find that Lot had separated from Abram. Lot

is here a typical man; he has dropped out of the testimony, though I admit he is converted. No doubt he is a gross case. He deliberately gives up the path of faith for worldly advantage. He did not give up God, but he gave up the path of testimony. God is able to preserve him, and He *did* preserve him: He knows how to deliver the righteous out of temptation. It is not that his soul was lost, but he has lost the testimony, and that is what brings him into all the trouble.

I pass on to another instance of losing the testimony which was committed to Abraham, and one still more to be dreaded. This is Jacob at Shalem. When a soul drops out of the testimony his worship bears the character of it. It is not that a man becomes irreligious; but his religion bears the stamp of his failure. So, selfishness is stamped on Jacob's altar.

Eventually Jacob becomes, at the close of his life, rather the remnant of this period. The remnant is always a bit of the original thing, it is not a *new* thing. As we read in Isaiah vi., "The holy seed shall be the substance thereof." Everything that God has entrusted to man, fades in his hand; but God never loses sight of the first characteristics of what He has set up, and at the end they come out pure and simple; come out at even-tide in all the freshness and beauty of the dawn. Jacob's death bed is a beautiful close to that period.

However, I was more dwelling on how he dropped out of the testimony. After his long exile in Syria, he has got back to the right ground; to a night of trembling, but to the name of Israel. And thence he passes on to Shalem, where he neither gives up the right ground, nor loses sight of his new name, but where he gives up the testimony in a very insidious way. He buys a piece of land and builds a house. Now the testimony in that day was not to have a foot of land. Remember that I do not condemn a saint for having land now; it is no worse than having a house. But Jacob's possessing it took him out of the testimony. Abraham had great riches, but he never used them to exalt his position by possessing the land of Canaan. Beware of making a position in the world with your money.

Jacob is wayworn; he comes to a moment of rest at Shalem; he thinks that, as he is in the right place he may rest; and he builds an altar. But what kind of altar? He circumscribes the blessing to *himself*. We see this in our prayers sometimes; our desires revolving round ourselves. But if in communion with the Lord we shall take His circle instead of our own. I compare it to a man walking in his garden and saying, How beautifully the sun shines on my garden. If he could only see the magnificent circle the sun performs and how nothing is hid

from the heat of it, he would find out that, in its blessing of all creation, it did not leave out his garden. A man out of the testimony always becomes individual; he is not occupied with the range of God's blessing, but circumscribes it to his own circumstances.

We find in Genesis xxxv. what a cleansing Jacob's house and surroundings got. The more I am in concert with Christ, the more the minutest thing in my ways which is unsuitable to Him is disclosed to me. It is not a question of bringing Christ down to where we are, but of carrying us up to where He is. If you bring Him down to your interests, you make use of Him as the Man of sorrows. He does sympathise with us, thank God; He knows how even a shower of rain may affect us. But I say I have to do with Christ in His divine interests, and the more I am in concert with Him, the more He assures me of His interest in my things, in all the minutiae of my needs down here.

The second testimony is Joshua. This is a further step, and, to my mind, a very important one. It is quite a different thing; it is *possession* of the land. We find that Abraham's burying-place is the very spot given to Caleb for a possession. Abraham was not to possess; but in Joshua's time the word was: "Go in and possess." Joshua is a figure of the Spirit of Christ: by the Spirit of Christ I possess now those heavenly

things which are mine in Him. We find the antitype of it in Ephesians ; we are brought into the possession in heaven now, but it is as militant. We belong to that place. Like Abraham we are called out to walk on earth as separated to God, as God's man here, looking for a city that has foundations ; and also, like Joshua, we are called to go in and possess it. We are called to hold the heavenly places by the power of God. This is our present calling.

But perhaps, as you look at the history of faith, you ask : What is the difference between Abraham in the land and Joshua ? I answer, Abraham was the heavenly stranger in type, which Philipians sets forth. Joshua typifies how God has brought us into possession of His things, not in body yet, but in spirit ; and the difficulty is to maintain that ground, and to maintain it as brought there by God. We see in Israel's history how they failed to do so, and how they were diverted from it by the enemy.

We find in Samuel what characterises the close of this period. Two things mark him. Samuel believes in the trade winds. He believes in getting the people back into the current of God's ways. Look at 1 Samuel vii. He says, " 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 he will deliver

you out of the hand of the Philistines." They were actually in the place, and yet they were not in possession of the place. They were actually strangers in their own land. The divine action here is beautiful in its simplicity. What happened? Samuel prayed; the Lord thundered with a great thunder, and the Philistines were discomfited and smitten; and they came up no more into the coasts of Israel all the days of Samuel.

And then Samuel set up a stone there, and called it Ebenezer. I want you to compare the difference between the stone here and the stone in Joshua. That in Joshua hears all the counsel of God for His people. The one in Samuel is rather a witness to God's gracious help to them in the trial into which their own departure from Him had brought them. Hitherto had Jehovah helped them. Just as a man will specially care for, minister to, and help his wife when she is in feeble health. The heart rejoices in the confidence that mere weakness is no hindrance to our communion with the Lord, but is rather an opportunity when fidelity to Him discovers the greatness of His interference on its behalf.

Though it might come in more suitably a little later on, I turn to Haggai. Jacob's failure was caused by having a selfish object; it was pretty much the same in Haggai's time. This is the most dangerous kind of departure, and it is the saddest too: that of being discouraged in God's



service because of the difficulties in the way. The people had gone through great sorrow and exercise of heart to escape from Babylon ; they had really begun well in the testimony in Ezra's time ; but the pressure became too great for them, and they stopped building. We get the same class of people described in 2 Timothy, where Paul speaks of all those that were in Asia as having turned away from him. So the people stopped building for sixteen years, and were exclusively occupied with their own blessings. It is astonishing how devoted saints occupy themselves with their own blessing—how they get concentrated and absorbed in their own spiritual gain, how they limit God to providing for them. Their walk is very correct, but they are not in the testimony ; they have lost God's object, the great centre of their position ; they are not occupied with the Lord's interests, and, as a consequence, they are not getting on, not making progress, not gaining light.

But what is the testimony in the present day ? you ask.

In the Gospel of John we find quite another thing from that which we have been considering ; we find there a most deeply interesting subject. When the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son into this world. And now there is a faithful witness on earth. All the preceding testimonies we have seen break

down, but there is no break-down here. It is the full and perfect testimony for God. It is a blessed divine Person walking on earth, a Man among men. It is "the Son of man who is in heaven." He never left heaven. I see a Man on earth who was not formed by anything here; I see the bringing down of a new thing that was entirely according to the mind of God. It is marvellous! Nothing can be more marvellous! I see Him day after day, year after year, sitting among men—and I watch tier upon tier of that wonderful unfolding of all the beauty of God in the framework of a man—in all the small details of the life of a man upon earth. He never adopted a single habit or fashion of this world; He only brought God down to it; He was the full exhibition of Him in every detail of human life. Here you have the perfect witness. Well might it be said of Him that "the world itself could not contain the books" that could be written about Him!

The new Jerusalem will be the beautiful reproduction of everything that that blessed One was—of all the attributes of His Person. You and I will be little atoms of that wonderful city which will come forth to illuminate the earth in the ages to come.

"He that cometh from heaven is above all." This is the One we have. A Man who was entirely dependent upon God; who fully set

forth God ; who did everything according to the mind of God ; in whom there was nothing borrowed, nothing acquired ; so that they could say of Him : " How knoweth this man letters, having never learned ? " Yet He could say : " I have more understanding than all my teachers. " The King had really come ; He wept over the city that would not have Him. And see His **interest** in the house of God ; how He drives out all that was defiling it ; and, as He goes out of that temple to give all His living in order to bring out what is really due to God on earth, He meets a poor widow casting in all the living that she had. She is in sympathy with God's testimony at the time, in sympathy with Him who was Himself the testimony, who was maintaining what was due to God on earth. It was not now the 19th Psalm—creation and revelation bearing testimony : that was God's testimony. The testimony was now in a Man, the Son of God. He fulfils all. He could say, " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. " He carries your heart up to the One He is expounding. All the resources of God are connected with this blessed One. Yet some, when they heard this, went back and walked no more with Him. They dropped out of the testimony ; few followed this stranger from heaven.

Since the history of faith began there were always two classes of believers ; those who have

faith for the testimony, and those who have not. I do not slight the latter, but I do say they are not in the testimony though saved souls. In a day of distraction like this, I believe our true place is to be pioneers, sappers and miners to the whole army of God. We ought to face the difficulties, **and** make the road for the others to come on by. We should remove the impediments in the way, and thus make straight paths for our own feet and those of others, thus doing everything that may conduce to their help and blessing.

But the Lord has gone away ; and the testimony is very simple. He is the Centre of it. He is the Sun of this new system. And He Himself has gone away. But He says, I will send to you the Holy Ghost, and He shall "testify of me." I believe everything now depends on that "*me*." Some one might say, I thought that was the gospel. It is quite true that I must speak to a lost sinner of Christ, but we have something more than that here. I can call nothing true testimony but that which is a reproduction of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel is connected with the testimony, because formative of the testimony. The Lord is rejected from His place here, and the Holy Ghost comes to testify of Him during His absence. "To testify of *me*."

Individually, "whom the Father will send in my name." The name is the testimony. The name is the reproduction of what is already ex-

pressed. The Holy Ghost comes to dwell in my body, and to acquaint my heart with this One whose name I am to carry out down here.

In 2 Timothy I find the apostle looking at the times that were coming, and at the character of those who depart from the testimony. Demas was not an unconverted man; my impression is that he went off preaching.

The apostle says that Timothy was "not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner." Paul was the one who had been the great exponent of the glorified Christ, the heavenly man on earth. No person is in the testimony who does not hold that it is not the earthly man but the heavenly man the saint is to be down here. A heavenly man is characterised by two things: he is a stranger here, claiming nothing but a burying-place in the world; but, by the Spirit of God, the earnest, he *has* possession in heaven.

All in Asia turned away from the testimony when they found the teacher of it in the enemy's hand. Like those in Haggai, they gave up because of pressure. In Hebrews the people began brightly, they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in themselves a better and an enduring inheritance.

Now we find in 2 Timothy two things that suit the perilous times: Paul's doctrine, and the other scriptures. If you do not understand Paul's

doctrine, you cannot interpret the Old Testament. How could you interpret Joshua if you did not understand Ephesians? Where could you get the clue to it? Paul put the two things together: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

I turn to Colossians for a definite statement of what the testimony is: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." It is *in His name*. Let the youngest begin to carry that out! It will affect the very tie you wear! If truly carried out it would effect a wonderful change in every one of us. Do not say, That is too exacting! Not at all, if your heart is in the simple enjoyment of fellowship with Him. I do not believe a wife wears anything particular but that it answers to something that she finds in the secret of her husband's heart. It is just so with us and the Lord. It is doing the thing He would like me to do. I have often asked myself, in writing a letter, What would the Lord have me say? Oh! you say; that puts the standard too high. Not if you are to "*do everything* in the name of the Lord Jesus."

I say in conclusion, that there is such a force of evil working around us—such a power accu-

mulating—as will raise man here on earth to independence of God. I feel we need to be able to stand against it. We shall surely be drawn into it unless we can come out with some counter thing vastly superior to it, such as: “I belong to Christ.”

In conclusion, what then is our simple calling?

It is to reproduce Christ. It is, as the apostle says, that Christ may be magnified in my body. That is the way to *begin*; it is an individual thing for each one. But I do not believe that any one can truly carry on the testimony apart from the body of Christ. I cannot do without the members. I will give you two little lines that are of great use to myself:

I must go on without many;  
I cannot do without any.

If my arm has been cured of paralysis, I say, Thank God, my *arm* is well again; and now I am labouring to get the whole system free. You do not understand the testimony if you do not embrace every soul that belongs to Christ; “*His own*,” the “*me*” of Acts ix.

In the Revelation John begins with the marred candlestick; but, before the close of the book, he is shewn the church coming down from heaven resplendent in divine beauty, to shew forth the attributes and glory of Christ in the very scene where the defection occurred; it comes down in

all the beauty of Christ and without one thought of self. He delights to call us His bride; He owns no other identity; and you are not true to your identity if you are not bridal in character. And as the bride, we enter into the most wonderful and intimate fellowship with Him.

The book being given to John, his work is done; his tarrying "till I come" is fulfilled. And now the bride says, in company with the Holy Ghost, "Come."

May we have power to grasp the magnificence of such a calling, of being given such a testimony. May our affections be so entirely occupied with the Lord, identity of interest with Him so command our souls, that every heart may rise up with delight at the very thought that He is coming.

The Lord grant that our souls may grow into a simpler and fuller knowledge of what the testimony is, and keep therein, for His name's sake.

(J. B. S.)

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## PRACTICAL SEPARATION AND TESTIMONY.

HEBREWS XI. 13-16; MARK XIII. 31-34; EPHESIANS I. 19-23.

THERE is one point in Hebrews xi. in connection with what we have had before us, which is, that that which throws us out of this scene as to our hopes, expectations and joys, is the truth that God Himself is a stranger in His own world. God is not at home here, because His Son has been rejected; and the effect of this is, that we who are united to Christ are thrown out of it too; but into His blessed company. It is this which has separating power with the saints.

We are so apt to look upon ourselves as losers because of this. It tests the heart continually while down here, thus proving whether we are content to let all go for Him. We gain everything.

To Abram God appeared as "the God of glory." God takes His start there with him, and from thence unfolds to him His purposes and counsels in Christ. God gives rest to the heart here by choosing us to share in His rest there; and He calls us out from this scene, separates us

from what is in it, that we may be able even now to take part in that rest.

Look at the Lord in Mark iii. They said, "He is beside himself." They could not understand His blessed path of self-renunciation, self-forgetting toil in their midst. Neither can a worldly Christian understand it. And to the extent to which the saints follow in His steps will the world be unable to understand them. It is "As long as thou doest well to *thyself* men will speak well of thee."

But what are these to the Lord who take His path with Him? He looks round with delight and satisfaction upon them, and says: "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." Priceless is that will to Him. All such as do it most near; all relationships dear and tender concentrated in one. This is the result of faithfulness to God in days of evil. Christ loves our company; He delights to have us with Him. If the church has left its first love, has Christ ever left His? He loves to have us in association with Himself, linked with Himself; and how can that be? Only in the path in which God's will is everything; His disciples had left all to follow Him.

But then comes the question, are we content to take the lot of pilgrims? These of whom we read in Hebrews that they declared plainly that

they sought a country, "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." And what was the consequence? What did God do for them? When we link ourselves with God's interests, He can link Himself to ours. It is then He is "not ashamed to be called our God." It is wondrous that God should call Himself the God of men on earth.

It is seldom God takes up people in this way; it is only with the patriarchs and David. He links Himself to the interest of those who identify themselves with Him upon earth; to those who have no home, no country, no city here, and who are content to find themselves in company with Christ in His path of separation and rejection in this scene through which He passed. If through grace I can take this place, He says of me "My brother, and my sister, and mother."

But what does it involve? Self-surrender; there must be the giving up of self. The more self-surrendered we are here, the more we are able to enter into and learn the path of that blessed One on earth, the more we are able to walk with Him in it. How did He come into this world? The manger and the cradle tell. He says of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart." He came as the dependent One, the obedient One. God never had but one obedient Man upon earth; never but One who always did His will, who could say: "I do always those things that please

him." All else were disobedient; men were in open defiance of God; and there is not a single one of us, though saved by His grace, that does not carry the principle, the root of this in his heart. So that though we know what this path of obedience is, yet how often we get out of it. There never was any trod the earth like Him. The meekest, the lowliest man ever seen here was the Son of God.

It was just this point that our brother touched upon which I wished to take up a little. *Rest* we must not seek here; our rest is to come, when all will be according to God's own heart.

As regards the testimony of God, there are only two places where the apostle says he is "not ashamed." He is "not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord" in Timothy; and he is "not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" in Romans. We get these two great subjects: the testimony of the Lord, and the righteousness of God, in these two epistles. How wonderful! A display of righteousness for man, and that God's own. Sin righteously met for the believer, by God taking all that His Son has done and using it to justify sinners!

Well may the Lord present Himself to Nicodemus as the only One who could tell of heavenly things, because He "came down from heaven." Thus, divine love is heavenly. (See John iii. 12, 13, and 16.) Conversion is connected with this

earth ; but heaven itself came down to die for me, to sacrifice itself for me. Who can tell the wonders of this love ! The divine wonders and depths that we shall enjoy, as we were hearing, in eternity, all flowing to us from that blessed One to whom "all power is given."

I once saw on a tombstone a little verse which struck me,

*"Millions of years my wondering soul  
Shall o'er my Saviour's beauties rove."*

It was not about the sinner, or even about the salvation, it was the beauties of Christ Himself. It spoke wonderfully and beautifully of the occupation of the soul through all eternity ; and that is the essence of Christianity. The more I see men giving up Christianity and slighting it, the more its beauties come out ; and the more the blessed Person of Christ is despised, the more His beauty comes out too.

Then there is the other side to this path of separation on earth. We look up into heaven, and what do we see there ? The glorified Man ; the One who fills heaven with His glory. What do we find is the great subject there in the book of Revelation ? It is the Lamb in the midst of the throne ; the Lamb who was slain ; it is the worthiness of the Lamb and the efficacy of His blood. And how is He spoken of ? When John sees Him he says : "His head and his hairs were

white like wool, as white as snow." Just as the evangelist says of the transfiguration, His raiment was "white as snow." And Daniel gives us "the Ancient of days," whose garment was "white as snow." The very selfsame words are applied to the sinner washed in that precious blood: he is made "white as snow, as white as wool." (Isaiah i.) Such is the place, the portion, that He has won for me, and I glory in the means that has done it.

But this is not all; there is more than salvation. God has His eternal counsels in Christ. What is the will of God? Is it to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him;" from the highest archangel down to a blade of grass? This is God's counsel as to Him who came down from heaven and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, that He might give us a place on His throne, a place in His glory. Thus is God working everything after the counsel of His own will. Thus He has "saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." He has gained too the victory over death and the

grave, and has gone up there to sit at the right hand of God. Man looks at death as the *end* of everything, his own complete overthrow, whereas the very first thought as to the testimony is that of death abolished, by Christ having taken His place in it. We are connected with Christ as the fruit of His death, and every after-step is connected with death, He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all heavens.

“God hath not given us the spirit of fear.” The apostle did not give way under the consciousness of the difficulties that pressed upon him. He knows that he has the spirit of “power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Therefore he says, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.” He had not a fear, however things might be failing outwardly. He was not going to give up; he would maintain it in every iota, and be himself in practical consistency with it, as our brother has been pressing.

I am sure we all feel the need of more earnestness on this point; I do. The apostle, as Moses, counted the *reproach* of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Is there a despising of this world in its objects, in its principles, in its progress? Do we not too often take up a *little* of it? And remember, the more we meet of its reproach, the better for us; it is really a

thing to be loved, to be valued, if it is the reproach of *Christ*.

If we are not on the ground that Moses was, counting it greater riches than all here, we shall surely be formed by the world around us. I am persuaded of this, and the more so as I look back and think of early days amongst us, when some can remember that the reproach of Christ was a thing gloried in; and now, when I look around, I see the great assimilation to the world that is coming in. What a contrast!

Surely it is for us to be refusing citizenship in this world; refusing a country, a home here. It is then God can say: I am not ashamed to be linked with those people; not ashamed to be called their God. And in the day that is coming we shall share in His throne as His companions, His bride, partakers of His glory for ever.

(A. C. O.)

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## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

I DESIRE to say a few words upon the hope of the church—the coming of the Lord; and upon the effect of expecting to see Him come.

We have too much overlooked this hope. The servant in Luke xii. said: “My lord delayeth his coming,” he dropped the idea of meeting the Bridegroom. It is that which marks first love; the desire to see Him; and the church of Ephesus lost it. It is the sense that I cannot do without Him; it is not affection merely; it is that the heart has no full joy except with this blessed One and in His presence.

I do not think the servant *preached* it; I believe he *acted* on it. He said it “in his *heart*,” and then he went and mixed with the world. The effect on the church of such service was that “they all slumbered and slept.” Sleep is inactivity. In Canticles the bride says: “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” There is none of the activity that first love gives; an activity that you never could describe, but it is always equal to the occasion. A mother does not pre-arrange what she will do for her baby. Thus the true

heart has such love for Him that it is quick-sighted to know the minute attentions that suit Him. The outcome of first love is practically first works.

They all slumbered and slept for a long time ; but at midnight there was the cry : " Behold the bridegroom ! " This cry went forth fifty years ago. It had an immense effect. But the most ardent advocates of the Lord's coming became the greatest opposers of it. It was not intentional opposition on their part ; it was an effort of Satan to get rid of the light that was shining in.

They said, Truly, the Lord may come to-night, but you cannot go forth to meet Him, for you have not the Holy Ghost. Pray for the Holy Ghost ; pray that you may have oil in your vessels. So they had prayer meetings for the Holy Ghost. Thus they made the Holy Ghost, not Christ, their object ; whereas the object of the saint is Christ. It is remarkable the way in which Satan will manage to set up a counterfoil to contravene what God is about.

The cry was : " Behold the bridegroom ! " This addresses the heart. It is not a historic event. As sure as you hold any truth intellectually you will eventually become an opposer of it. If you hold the coming of the Lord as a historic event, I am bold to say that you will become an opposer of it in practice. I have seen people who talk

much of this truth, and yet are the most impatient people as to things down here. They seem trying to grasp all they can in the world, just because they think He is coming, so they will not have much time for it. It is quite a different thing when the heart is so occupied with Christ that its one desire is to see His face.

But you might die ?

Well, if I did, I should have a grand instalment of it. "To depart and be with Christ is far better;" and a shorter way of waiting for His coming too; for the apostle has no idea of time up there, whilst He waits with Christ for His appearing; we suffer from time here, but there is none there.

But do you really look forward to this—I shall see His face? What is the effect of it upon you? I should like to hear some one tell me the effect it would produce.

For myself, I believe it would produce a character of behaviour suitable to Himself before He comes. He consoles me in the present; He manifests Himself to me; I have communion with Him; I have His joy; but I look forward to a greater delight than all these; it is that of seeing Him face to face; and, when I see Him, I shall be like Him.

In John xiv. He tells me how He consoles me in the interval, great correspondence takes place between Him and the true heart; just as two

beloved friends when separated will continually communicate with one another. But these communications, though they relieve the heart in absence, really increase the desire for presence. The deeper, the more continued the intercourse that I now have with Him, the more it will rejoice my heart to see His blessed face. The very thing that makes up for His absence is that which intensifies the desire of my heart to see Him.

I desire that we may be exercised about two things. One is, the effect produced upon us by His coming *before* He comes; the other, the effect *when* He comes. I hear it sometimes said: "Oh, the Lord will settle everything when He comes, and make it all right then!" I say, I would to God He would settle *me*; and that now, *before* He comes. If I am the bride, and I know that my Lord is coming, I want to have all in order for Him when He comes. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." And as that moment approaches, I feel like Elijah on his last day. It was the busiest day of his life. While I am saying, Come, I am really all the more earnest, all the more active, all the more intent upon what concerns Him on the earth, so that *my* last day may be the busiest of my life too.

(J. B. S.)

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## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

THE words that have just been spoken have touched a very deep chord in my heart; one that was first touched sixteen years ago. For I was slumbering and sleeping, like others. I had gone to a far distant land, and there God in His mercy wrought with me for His name's sake. I got the truth doctrinally first, but God soon made it a deep reality to my soul. And this truth has, I believe, been the great quickening truth throughout Christendom in these days. Just as three hundred years ago God wrought through that of justification by faith, so now, I believe, He has quickened souls, roused them up by this truth of the Lord's coming. As it comes with power before souls it wakes at once the question, Who is this Person, and what is my relation to Him?

Now it is one thing to be holding correctly the doctrine that He is coming, and quite another to be going out to meet Him. I do not believe that it means coming out of the different systems of religion or different worldly associations. I believe it means our being really ready in our hearts, in our lives, in our ways, in everything connected with us:—ready to see Him. Are we

ready to see Him to-night? Is everything about us ready? As to all our associations, as to our hearts' affections, are we ready? What is the state of our hearts? Is my heart set on this one thing, to see His face?

I believe that we lose power oftentimes in speaking to others, or in exhorting them, just because we have very greatly lost hold of this truth. There is a want of freshness to us in it. The teacher perhaps feels: Here is a congregation which needs rousing, but speaking to them of the coming of the Lord will not rouse them; for the subject is stale, they know it perfectly. Now the Lord's coming ought never to be stale; it ought always to be fresh to our hearts.

If the Lord has taught me anything in bringing me to these meetings it is our want of power. I mean the need we have of being simply fashioned by the operation of the Holy Ghost. We need power; we need the grace of God working in us and among us. Whereas, alas, too often in individuals He is a grieved Spirit; and, when we come together as a congregation, He is a quenched Spirit. I believe we need to cultivate this power; we need to seek power more; that power which is got through seeking our "Father which seeth in secret," and who "rewardeth openly," in order that there may be a growth in life and an inward strengthening in our souls.

(B. F. P.)

## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

REVELATION XXII. 7, 12, 20.

As we were singing the fifty-sixth hymn, "Lord we await thy glory," my eyes and my heart went up, and I felt, "Lord, I *do*." I felt that I *was* awaiting His glory. And I enjoyed the hymn greatly. I sang it with my spirit; I sang it freshly, freely, as one often does not, but as one ought always to do. Our words go to the Lord, and our hearts should go with the words, as they often do not. I felt truly I was waiting to see the glory of Christ, and I was happy in the thought of it.

Next we sang: "We have no home but there." And I felt that that was true too, and I was happy in singing it and in the prospect of the home reserved for us in the Father's house.

Well, further on in our meeting, when it became a question of our going forth to meet the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the unfaithful servant, and the consequences of being one, I did not feel so happy; and in connection with this, these three verses presented themselves to my mind, on

which I should like to say a word for us all who are here, but more especially for those who are young, and may be not fully established in the grace of God.

Now, as already referred to, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is never "stale;" it never *can* be to the heart that loves Him. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself must be ever fresh and bright where there is faithfulness to Him.

The first of the verses that I have read is very beautiful: "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Well, the sayings of this book are beautiful sayings, beautiful words. They are words that touch the heart and conscience; they are words of holiness, words of truth, words of light. They are words that come to us from Him whose feet are as burning brass, and His eyes as a flame of fire; and therefore the words are beautiful words, and the sayings are beautiful sayings.

Let me quote a few of these beautiful sayings of Jesus:

He says to the church at Smyrna that they were to have tribulation, but He adds, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." What a *beautiful* word is that!

Then, again, take His word to Philadelphia: "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. . . . Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." He says, I will take care of you ; you shall be sheltered by me in the day of trial. That, too, is a *beautiful* word.

And now, He says, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the man who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. "Blessed" is the same as "happy." *Happy* is that man. Well, I doubt not there are many here who are keeping these sayings. But mark, there is no response here to the promise of the coming of the Lord Jesus, connected as it is with "keeping his words ;" there is no answer from the church to it.

Now look at the next verse. "And behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." How gracious ! All that we do for the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter how small it may be, is owned of Him ; nothing is forgotten ; though, as David says, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given unto thee." I have nothing of my own. If I bring an offering to the Lord, it is of His own I offer unto Him. If a man is devoted, it is no thanks to him that he is so ; if he does great things for the Lord, gives up much for Him, there is no credit due to him. It is all the Lord's work in him. "What maketh thee to differ?"

Nothing in us. It is all of the sovereign grace of God that worketh in us by His Spirit. And yet the wonderful thing is that He says, I will give you a reward! To me, who ought to be in hell long ago if I had what I deserve, to me the Lord says, I will give you a reward! Why, it is a *beautiful* verse, that! Enough to stir us to the very depths of our hearts, is it not?

Thus we have these two things: keeping His word, getting these blessed and beautiful sayings; and then the reward by-and-by, when grace shall have culminated in glory.

But still there is no response to this announcement, "Behold, I come quickly." There is no answer from anybody; no one says "Come" to it yet.

But now I pass on to the last verse: "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The Lord Jesus says: Surely I come quickly; I say nothing to you about the sayings; nothing about the reward; I say nothing but what will make you think of *me*; *I* am coming. And immediately there flows out the response: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is nothing but the supreme and sovereign grace of the Lord Himself that makes me give the response—that calls it out from my heart. It is this alone that makes me happy in the thought of meeting Him. If I think of my devotedness, alas! I shall not have confidence

before Him ; it turns me upon myself, to what I am and to what I do, and I shall not be free to say, "Come." The word of God should search us; I trust it *has* searched us at this time. But if we go home from these meetings with the best possible desires to put everything right for the Lord's coming, to deal with every single thing that we judge unsuitable to Him, it would not make us happy at the thought of His coming ; it would not lead our hearts to say, "Come." That which sets us free in the thought of seeing Him is the free, sovereign grace of God, and that alone. Does that make us tremble at the thought ? does that fill us with fear ? Not for a moment ! Contrariwise. It is grace that establishes our hearts in the hope of His coming, and it is grace that quickens and encourages our steps in the path of devotedness to Him meanwhile.

I just turn from this to one other word in 2 Timothy : "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Here is a crown of righteousness for all who love the Lord's appearing. The apostle might say : The crown is my reward ; my portion for my faithfulness ; and I could only

answer: Well, good-bye, Paul; you and I shall never meet again. But no, not so. There is no question but that every man's reward shall be according to his own labours, and the apostle will have the full reward of his own labours as he says: "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." But the crown of righteousness is not given to a certain class; it is not promised as the result of special devotedness. True, Paul says, "the Lord shall give it *unto me*" in that day; but that he may not in anywise discourage certain souls, timid ones that need encouragement by the way, he adds immediately: "and not to me only but"—mark well the words—"unto *all* them that *love his appearing*." It is the common portion, surely, of every true Christian.

Well, I was trying to ask myself, as our brother said, what would be the effect on me if I knew the Lord was just about to appear. I can only answer, I think my feeling would be: *I am His*; and that would settle all for me. The grace that has saved me will, I am assured, carry me right on to the end; that free and sovereign grace which has set my heart at rest from the judgment, will also set me at liberty in His presence, when He comes in glory, as it keeps me now while waiting for Him.

(E. C.)

## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

1 JOHN iii. 1-3.

I AM sure our hearts have been stirred, and our consciences too, by what has been brought before us as to the coming of the Lord ; and I am sure not one here will go away from these meetings without earnest desires of heart that the truths we have had before us may be more to our hearts' affections than they ever have been before.

I have read these three verses because they bring before us in a practical form the hope that we have in Christ—a present relationship and a present hope. Our association with Him, united to Him at the Father's right hand by the power of the Holy Ghost, sets us before the world in the place in which Christ Himself was when here upon earth—in a path of separation and rejection. Conformity to Him is what we seek even now, being even now "the children of God." But when it comes to looking for Him, that which surely every heart longs for, then it is: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but

we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

And where this hope is real and true—and oh, beloved brethren, the Lord make it more real and true to each one of us every moment—what does it bring with it? "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." There is the purifying of ourselves, of our ways, of our surroundings, of our lives in holiness; the separating ourselves from every single thing that is unsuitable to Him for whom we wait, and whom we shall be perfectly like in the glory.

The Lord make it the desire of every heart to be more like Him now—to be now "purifying ourselves even as he is pure."

(A. P. G.)

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## THE COMING OF THE LORD.

EPHESIANS V. 25.

I SHOULD like to say just a word on the passage we began these meetings with: "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it."

One remark I would make in passing, is that this meeting to-night recalls the memory of those held some years ago when the truth of the coming of the Lord always had such a prominent place in the ministry of the word, much more so than it has done of late.

I think we must confess that we have in some degree lost the sense of the reality and blessedness of this truth, and the same "constancy of hope" has not been maintained in our hearts. We can therefore only thank the Lord that He is reviving in our souls that which should be the joy and delight of our hearts, the hope of soon seeing Him face to face. "To wait for his Son from heaven;" such is the hope of every believer who knows Jesus as his deliverer from the wrath to come.

But to return to this scripture with which we began, and which brings before us the Lord's

present interest in and care for His church here on earth, which tells us thus of His interest in each one of us individually as part of that church, and of His service for us on high at the Father's right hand.

There is no scripture that so fully brings out the perfect love of Christ for His church as this. We get here, as has been often remarked, the past, the present, and the future activities of the love of Christ. It is a perfect love, for it is a love that never wanes. He *loved* the church; and here is the most perfect proof of it: "He gave himself for it." That is the extent to which He values the church. A man values a thing in proportion to what he has paid for it. How does Christ value the church? Poor, miserable things though we be, He gave Himself for us. It was a love that kept nothing back; He gave *Himself*; He could do nothing more.

And then: "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." This is His present action. Do you think He has lost sight of us because He has gone up on high? No; He loves us right on to the end. His very bringing us together, as He has now done, that our hearts may be encouraged and built up in Him, is a manifest token of His present love and care for us, of this love that never wanes.

And then the third point, and this is one that, I believe, will awaken in our hearts the desire



for His coming; *He is waiting* for it *Himself*: "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." If our love has waned, and in some measure we have forgotten that which is our "blessed hope," His love and patience never fail. He still waits with loving desire for the moment when He will present all-glorious to Himself, the church which He has purchased with His own blood.

If you loved a person with a *perfect* love, no matter what their present condition, you would never be satisfied until you had brought them into your own condition. Suppose a man really loves a woman whom he finds in a low estate, he will never be satisfied until he has placed her by his side in his own estate; he says she must share with me fully all the joy, the pleasure, the honour, the riches that are mine; I must have her altogether in my own estate. Less than this would not be *perfect* love. And so Christ will never be satisfied until He has brought His church into *His own estate*. What are all these spots and wrinkles? They are the marks of *our* estate. But He will wipe out every mark, every trace of them, and bring us into *His own estate*, into a condition and position worthy of Himself.

Whatever the calling now, whatever the blessedness of it, and it is great, as it is made known to

us and sustained in the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet it is not the fulness; it is only a part of that which shall be. The day is coming when we shall no longer see obscurely, but face to face, when we shall know "even as we are known."

When these things come before our souls with any degree of freshness, does it not make us feel what a small, dim, feeble apprehension we generally have of them? This epistle tells us of "the *hope* of his calling." The calling itself is a wonderful one, and we *have* that; it is a present thing to us; we are even now united to Christ. But there is a hope connected with it; a hope of something that we have not yet; and that is the obtaining of the *full* realisation of all that results from this most blessed union, to be *one* with Him, to be the sharers of His glory, to see Him face to face. And therefore there is "the *hope* of his calling."

In these bodies of humiliation, in this world of sin, we are not yet fully in His estate. But we *shall* be, we shall be *like Him*.

And *where* shall we be? Where *He* is, and nowhere else.

Nothing awakens so powerfully in our hearts the desire to see Him as the thought that *He* is waiting too. He says: I shall not be satisfied until I get you at home with myself in my glory.

Is there but feeble response in our hearts to this perfect love? What will augment it? Dwelling on that love we see in Him. It is always so. Nothing save occupation of heart with Christ produces in us the state that is suitable to Christ. It must produce a response in my heart when I see Him sitting there in patience, waiting to come and fetch me. I am the object of His *perfect* love. And I am waiting for Him to fetch me; I am waiting, with the whole church so scattered and torn now, to be brought home and presented to Himself, and in a state altogether worthy of Himself, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The Lord grant that our hearts may be awakened to look more constantly for Him, so that our path here may be as the path of the just, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

(F. H. B.)

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God makes particular *needs*, that we may see Christ fill them up and shine through them.

(G. V. W.)