

# “WORDS OF TRUTH,”

EccI. xii. 10.

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THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT; IT GIVETH UNDERSTANDING  
UNTO THE SIMPLE.”—Ps. cxix. 139.

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VOL. IV.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH.



## LIBERTY IN CHRIST.

ROMANS VIII.

CHRISTIANITY is a divine power acting in man. It is not a law requiring something from a sinner, though doubtless it does require the believer to walk according to Christ; but this is not its aspect. In Christianity God gives a nature which delights in the thing, and which is the thing that God requires. This is what St. James calls the perfect law of liberty. For instance, when a child has a strong wish to go somewhere, and his father gives him a command to go, it becomes a law of liberty to the child. It is obedience in the child to go, while at the same time it is the very thing the child wishes to do. On the other hand, if the father forbade the child to go when he wished, that would be no law of liberty, but a law of bondage. Christianity or the Gospel is not a requirement of something from man in the flesh, but the power of life making the believer free from the law of sin and death. This is expressed in the second verse, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Oh! what a blessed thing it is to be free—free from the law of sin and death, free to holiness, free to live to Christ,—we may cheat ourselves out of the blessing of this portion at times through giving way to the old nature, which never alters in its evil character, but this freedom is our place in Christ. I can say to every true Christian, "The Son has made you free; and now you are free indeed." A Christian can never say when he has sinned that he could not help it, for he has a life which has made him free from the law of sin and death.

The groundwork of this freedom is laid in the 3rd chapter, by forgiveness through the blood-shedding of Christ. When a sinner is brought, through grace, to know his sins, the blood of Christ meets him and gives him peace about his sins; but then he has also to learn that he not only had sins against

him needing forgiveness, but that he *is* a sinner, and this is a far more terrible discovery. He finds within him a nature that cannot do anything but sin. This exercise of heart is gone through in chapter vii. There we have one who is quickened, but who has not power. He is *not free*, and therefore he labours. He wants to get peace through victory over himself, but peace never comes through victory, but victory comes through deliverance. Therefore, at the end of chapter vii. the question is, "Who shall deliver me?" It is not, mark, How can I get forgiveness? but, How can I get deliverance? He comes, in this chapter, to the end of himself. He finds that though the fruit has all been pulled off the bad tree, it will bring forth another crop, just as bad as ever. He finds the flesh is too much for him. He hates what he does, and does what he hates. Now this is a useful lesson, but anyhow it is not liberty, but rather bondage. He has struggled and laboured to be free, and can't get free; well, now he has to learn that deliverance comes in another way altogether. God has condemned sin in the flesh. Why, how is that—says the troubled soul—that is the very thing that is troubling me? Yes, and God has dealt with it in the person of His own Son. "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (as a sacrifice) for sin condemned sin in the flesh;" the very thing you find yourself to be, God has condemned already. Therefore, says the apostle, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." It does not say here that there is no condemnation to them that are cleansed by the blood, but there is no condemnation to them that are "in Christ Jesus." Here I find that this terrible thing, this body of death which I have been vainly struggling against, God has condemned, and I am no longer in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He not only died as a sacrifice because of it, but He is risen again, and the very same power by which the Father raised Him from the dead is that by which He quickened me when I was dead in sin. I am free from the law of sin and death through this power, "for in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." It is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus which makes me *free*.

Oh! what a blessed thing it is to be free. What a blessed thing for a poor sinner as I was, after groaning and struggling under this terrible thing—this law of sin in my members—

to get a life by which I am altogether free from the law of sin and death, so that, before God, I am not seen in that condition at all. I have died to that through the body of Christ once for all. So the apostle says in chapter vii., "When we were in the flesh," and again in chapter viii., "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." This divine life in a risen Christ has made me free from it altogether. No doubt we have to guard and watch against it, but we are *not* in it, but *in* Christ Jesus.

See, too, how solemn the place is. Am I made free by this divine life of Christ in my soul? Well then, whatever I do must be done in His name, or I am going off my ground as a Christian. This is what the apostle James means by being "judged by the law of liberty." (Chap. ii.) It is not a question of condemnation at all; but if I am *free*, I must walk according to the law of liberty. If I take up a book to read, I ask myself, Is that according to this spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Can I do this in His name? We have liberty; we are free in Christ Jesus; so we must take care that we practically abide in this liberty. It is liberty to holiness; liberty to live to Christ; liberty to serve God. Therefore in the fifth verse we find, "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The mind of the flesh is enmity against God: all it does is independent of Him, in opposition to His law; "so, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Thus we see that we have a life in Christ which has freed us from the flesh, as a law holding us in bondage to sin, though we shall ever have to guard against its workings in us. We shall now see that the Holy Ghost personally dwells in our bodies as His temple. In verse 9 we read, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you." He dwells in us as power. The body is held as dead, because of sin. It is our privilege to hold it as dead, and never allow it to act, because its will is enmity against God. If you reply, Do you mean then to say, I am never to do what I like? Do what *who* likes? I ask, Do you want liberty to do what the old man likes, from which Christ has died to deliver us? Such a question is a practical denial of your being in Christ. "The body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." We have this life in a righteous way, God

having condemned sin in the flesh in the death of Christ, raised Him from the dead, and in the risen Christ we have the life in us. Thus are we already delivered as to our spiritual condition from the standing of man in nature, from the old Adam condition; and we shall shortly be actually delivered as to our bodies also. Therefore the Apostle says in verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." We have here first the Spirit of God in contrast with the flesh, then the Spirit of Christ, shewing the character of this life, that it is Christ in us, and then the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, because He is looking to the final result of this deliverance in quickening our mortal bodies, and making us one, in full fruition, with Christ in glory.

But more:—We have now not only seen that we are in Christ, having this law of the spirit of life in Him, but that also the Holy Ghost dwells in our bodies as in a temple. The Apostle goes on to show that He, thus dwelling in us, is the source of divine affections toward God, and in all the trials and sorrows consequent on possessing a divine life in a world of evil and death, the One who helps our infirmities, giving us to groan according to God.

We have not, says the Apostle, received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Before we knew deliverance, we were in bondage unto fear, and in such a case fear is a right thing, but affection is a holier thing than fear. It is this that the Spirit produces in our hearts. He teaches us to cry, Abba, Father. We draw near to God, in the sweet sense of relationship, and the Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are His children. It is not a painful canvassing of one's own heart for evidences of being a child, but the Spirit's own witness with our spirit, that we are His children. Oh! how joyful a thing it is to have these affections to God, to look up and call Him, Abba, Father! "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God," mark of God, all that He has is ours, and look how we come into this place of blessing, "Joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

But not only is the Spirit the source of divine affections towards God, but He also intercedes for us in all the sorrows

of our path down here. We may not even know what to pray for, but He groans in us, making intercession according to God, and He who searches the heart, finds in those unintelligent groans the mind of the Spirit. We may have to pray Him to search and try our hearts to see if there be any wicked way in us; it is well indeed for us to do this, but how blessed it is that He who searches our hearts finds in looking there the mind of the Spirit. We may not know what to ask. If we do, so much the better. We then have spiritual intelligence, but if we do not, we have the Spirit presenting our wants to God according to His mind, by groanings which cannot be uttered. He intercedes in us, and presents the sorrow we feel, by a groan according to God. Suppose you are in grief on account of a saint walking badly, and you don't know what to ask for, how blessed it is that the Spirit groans in you according to God, and that God sees in that expression of your ignorance and of your grief the mind of the Spirit. This being so, though we may not know what to pray for as we ought, yet there is one thing we do know, and that is, that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.

We now come to the third point, which lies more outside us, and secures the continuance of this power to the end God is for us. Here we see that all His counsels are for us. We are "the called according to His purpose;" "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son;" "called;" "justified;" and will finally be "glorified." "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" He has given His Son to clear us from everything. He has justified us. "Who is he that condemneth?" This is very clear, for if God justifies it is evident that no one can condemn; but he goes on to speak of the love of Christ. It is this which meets all the difficulties of the way. I may see that God has completely cleared me from all things, but then I may be anxious about the way, when there are so many difficulties and dangers. Oh, says the Apostle, it is Christ who died, yea rather who has risen again; who is even on the right hand of God, and who also maketh intercession for us. Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? He has been through everything. He has died, and that is the worst thing that could come. Ah, and He is risen again, and He knows how to sustain you in His love

under every trial. His ear was opened to hear as the learned—"as the *learned*"—mark! He came into the difficulties to which we are exposed, and He went through them all, even to death, that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

What have we then to fear? Shall we fear tribulation, or being counted as sheep for the slaughter? Nay, says the Apostle, for in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. There is not a trouble that we can come into in which His footprints are not there before us, so that we may taste His love under it. But then the Apostle adds, this love is "*the love of God*, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" What can separate us from that? "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—(nor the devil himself, for he is but a creature after all)—shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Thus have we seen that we, through grace, possess a life which frees us from the law of sin and death; a life which is given us in Christ after God had condemned sin in the flesh on the cross; then we have seen how we have the Spirit dwelling in us, teaching us to cry, "Abba, Father," and helping us in our infirmities. And, lastly, how that God being for us, nothing can separate us from His love!

May the Lord give us to know these things more deeply in our souls, and to walk through the world in the power of the life which He has given us, for His name's sake. Amen.

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## FRAGMENT.

Vessels such as Paul are the chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces wondrous music—but Christ is the music itself. A Moses fails—a Paul, a David—all fail. But He was always perfect—the fine flour mingled with oil. He could be on the mount with Moses and Elias, and be on the plain with the enemy, but He is alike perfect in each. Paul is taken to the third heaven, but if he comes back to consciousness of flesh he must have a thorn in it, lest he should be exalted above measure.

## D O U B T S.

CALLING on S. to-day I observed that he did not look so bright as usual, and soon the cause discovered itself. "Do you know," he said, "I sometimes think I am deceiving myself, and that I am not a child of God at all; for when I was converted, ten years ago, in the time of the Revival, I *felt* such a load of sins taken off me, and then I was so happy, but I have not at all the same feeling now, so perhaps after all I am self-deceived."

I saw at once that the fault here was self-occupation, looking *in* instead of "looking *off*" unto Jesus," and therefore I said, "Well, dear S., I am not surprised at what you say, for it is the natural result of basing your acceptance with God on your *experience*, and not on what *He says* in His word." I passed at one time through the same experience, and therefore I can feel for you. I used shortly after my conversion to have at times great sensations of joy, followed by corresponding feelings of depression, and while these latter continued of course I was miserable, but what gave me perfect peace was the ceasing to take account of my own feelings *altogether*, and beginning to rest calmly and quietly upon what God says in His word about Christ, who was delivered for my offences, and raised again for my justification; (Rom. iv. 25) and I reasoned with myself thus: "If Christ has indeed been delivered for my offences, there is no necessity for me to be delivered for them, for God is too just to demand payment over again for a debt already discharged, and if He has been raised again for my justification no one can ever lay anything to my charge, for His resurrection has set me down righteous in the presence of God. By His death and resurrection my sins were put away, and I am constituted righteous before God. I stand before God righteous as He is righteous. I believe this, and therefore, however much my feelings may change, I never doubt that I have peace with God."

"Well," Mr. ———, "I see quite what you mean, and I'm sure its very happy for *you*, but how am I to know that He died for *me*?"

"Oh," I said, "that is easily discovered. Look at Rom. v. 6, where it says, 'Christ died for the *ungodly*,' and ver. 8, where He died (it says) for 'sinners.'" Satan never yet could persuade me that I was neither a "sinner" nor "ungodly,"

and therefore I always have the assurance of God's word that He died for *me*; and putting two and two together, if He died for me I know that God is satisfied, and therefore not a shadow of a doubt, as to my acceptance, ever crosses my mind. I am enabled to "joy in God," by whom I have received this wondrous reconciliation.

"Well," Mr. ———, "I think I must not doubt any more; I see I must cease to be occupied with myself, and enter more into what God has *done* for me and what Christ *is* to me."

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## FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.

### THE WILDERNESS.

WHEN God visited Israel He did not say a word about the wilderness journey which lay between Egypt and the Land; and we find that for those who were born in the wilderness, the "reproach of Egypt" was not rolled away. Here, therefore, we have, in the Wilderness and Canaan, the two parts of Christian life; as deliverance, by redemption, out of Egypt, was the starting point in our course, having to pass through the wilderness as to our place, and also in heavenly places as to our privileges. What has a man, dead and risen, and thus come out of Egypt, to do with this present evil world? Pharaoh has no title over such a one; he is right out of it. Our Lord, in rising from the dead, has left death behind Him, and the world, and Satan; and He has done this for us. I have left my *sins* and *death* and *judgment* behind; not *conflict* behind—*He* has risen out of it all, and if I have a part in Christ I have a part in the place into which He has entered as Man risen from the dead. In Psalm xxii., the moment He is heard from the horns of the unicorns, what is the first thing? "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Historically we find this true, when the Lord says to Mary Magdalene, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;" and in another place, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." He leads the praises of His people, as the "First-born from the dead." He was alone when He had to suffer the agony—to bear the wrath. But when that is done He says as it were, "That is settled, and now you come and praise with me." How far can we say we are *not ashamed of Him* in this place? He is *not ashamed to call us brethren*—though He might

be ashamed of us. He speaks of peace after His resurrection, and having born the wrath; and calls them "brethren."

Peace being made, believers are associated with Christ, who has passed into the new place of man, as risen from the dead. It is not only that blood shelters from wrath, but redemption has brought us to God, and more—"Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance"—that is the glory.

But now begin the experiences of those whom God has redeemed. There were experiences before, but they were the experiences of a soul in which God had acted, but who had not learned deliverance. Like many, sincere and in the right path, but fearing judgment. Like the prodigal, right desires, but had never met his Father. If we meet God, or God meets us, we know Him in His true character. The Prodigal son at a distance was saying in his heart, "What will my father say to me when I come to him?" How many are saying this now. He said, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." This is called by some, humility; but when he met him he did not say it, for his father was on his neck. There was no uncertainty as to being a son, for his father treats him so; brings him into the house, puts the best robe on him, and the ring. He learned his place, not from what he was in himself, but from what his father was for him. Here is where the redeemed person is, with a great deal to learn truly, but he is redeemed. If I don't know that God's eye has seen the blood, I am thinking of God as a Judge still. But beyond the Red Sea, I am in a new place altogether. It is not merely that my sins are forgiven, but I am brought out of the flesh into Christ. "Ye are not in the flesh," that is, before God—not in the "first man," but in the "Second."

The practical effect of this is to bring us into the wilderness, and then I get another thing, a very humbling process as to myself.

What they learned in the wilderness we learn in Deut. viii. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee; to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna (which thou knewest not neither did thy fathers know), that he might make thee know that man doth not

live by bread only; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee:" and all, "That he might do thee good at thy latter end." (Deut. viii. 2-5, 16.) God was thinking of their very clothes, and their food; and at the same time testing themselves; and we want this too—to get our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil." They would not go up the mount of the Amorites, and take possession of the land, and so they must turn and stay in the wilderness. But what then? God turns round and goes back with them! What unwearyed patience and love!

Now what characterizes Christians in that state, and consequent upon redemption, is, the dwelling of the Holy Ghost with us and in us. God dwelling with man is always in consequence of redemption. He did not dwell with Adam; He visited Abraham, dined with him too, but never dwelt with him. The moment He redeemed Israel, God will dwell among them, and the pillar of cloud came down; He is in the camp, and also the moment they are across the Red Sea He talks of holiness (Exod. xv. 11, &c.), about which He had never talked in Genesis. Why? Because He is in the camp. He must have it like Himself.

When Israel is in bondage He comes as a Deliverer; when they are in the wilderness He dwells with them in a tent; when they come to fight the Canaanites, He brings a drawn sword, and when they were settled in the land, and Solomon had built a temple, He comes and dwells with them in His house. He adapts Himself to them. Now, in us God so dwells by the Holy Ghost individually, and also in the Church collectively. How can that be? It is not merely that we are born of God; we are redeemed, and have had the blood sprinkled upon us, and then the Holy Ghost comes and seals *after* believing. (Ephesians i. 13.) He quickens an unbeliever, and then seals the believer. He cannot seal an unbeliever, that would be putting His seal upon wickedness. I insist upon this because the presence of the Holy Ghost is the distinctive characteristic of the believer now, and of the Church, from the Saints before the day of Pentecost. We are cleansed, morally, by the washing of water by the word; sprinkled with blood;

anointed by the Spirit. As with the priests, so with us. (Exodus xxix.) A priest was washed with water, the blood was then put upon him, and then the oil. The presence of the Holy Ghost is the testimony to the value of the blood with which I have been sprinkled. Blood was put upon the right ear, thumb, and toe. There is nothing to pass into your head that is not under that guardian blood-shedding; you are to have nothing in your hand to defile, and nothing in your walk unholy. The anointing is the consequence of the blood-shedding. The Holy Ghost comes and says, (He sees with God's eyes), "That person is as white as snow, I will dwell there." "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which ye have of God;" and again, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed until the day of redemption." Not, mark, as an earnest of the *love* of God, but of the *inheritance*; "*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*" (Rom. v.)

These are the characteristics of wilderness experience, after redemption; God dwelling with us and in us, and our hearts tried and tested. The learning of ourselves, but the learning of them with God!

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, &c.

MATT. xiii. 47, &c.

ANOTHER similitude the Lord gives to the disciples, and here not confined to the true heirs of the kingdom, but taking in the whole scene as in that of the tare field. Only here it is not from a world-stand-point as that was, but it is God's estimate of the whole thing, and the real work that He was doing while men were glorying in theirs. That was given to the outside multitude—the world; this to the disciples within the house. And accordingly the Lord gives prominence to that which accomplishes His purpose in setting up the kingdom, or rather in allowing it to subsist in its present form, namely, to have the good taken out from the bad, and put into a place apart. The great object in this parable is to put the good fish into vessels. All the glory and power which accrued to the kingdom through the wickedness and failure of those to whom it was entrusted, is here ignored. It is not worth a thought in the mind of the Lord, save as the object of judgment, but which comes out plain and definite in what is

added to the parable. (Ver. 49.) From the former parable we have the appearance of the kingdom as it might be viewed by the outside world, which knows not the purpose of God to gather in souls in spite of men and devils: the latter is the carrying out of that purpose, and therefore gives God's reality.

We learn from this how impossible it is to have a right judgment of what transpires here below, of the world's history, the ways and doings of men, unless we are with God and learn His mind about them. So the disciples with Jesus get the mind of God, and looking beneath the surface of events find the accomplishment of His will in all. But we must be with Jesus to know it, "Who of God is made unto us wisdom." With Him we get *the truth*. The four empires were gold, silver, brass, and iron, splendour and strength to the world; and the world admired and bowed to them. But what were they before God? When He would give his estimate of them to His servant Daniel, how and under what likeness did he present these empires? As ravening beasts, monsters. Nothing in created nature was adequate as an emblem of their reality. So he unites different, and to our present perceptions, discordant attributes to form a picture of what He sees them to be. In our little path we cannot have a true estimate of the smallest circumstances apart from God. A wrong judgment sometimes tends to a wrong path.

This parable presents several interesting and important points for consideration. The sea, the fishermen, the casting of the net, the drawing to shore, and the final sorting. It presents the same thing in the main as the tare field, but under different symbols. As for instance, the sea here answers to the field there, yet with this difference that the field is the world at the beginning of the present period; it is the *commencement* both of the good and the evil, of which the following parables give the development. So the good fish answer to the good seed, and the rejected fish to the tares. But the parable before us, that of the net, supposes the previous existence of the kingdom, and is a similitude of it, after certain events have taken place. The sea being all the same emblematic of the condition of the world when the net was first cast into it, i.e. when the gospel of the kingdom was first promulgated.

It was from an earthly stand-point that the world was said to be a field. A place where good seed having been

sown, a good result might reasonably be expected. That is, I judge, it has respect to man's responsibility. And a good result would have been realized if tares had not been sown and the good seed overmatched. A field moreover suggests the thought of order and regularity, and such there were in the world to the eye of man.

But it is God's view we have here. The scene is unfolded before us from a heavenly stand-point, and not from an earthly. The disciples are in the *house* with Jesus, it is not a parable addressed to the multitude outside. This world so fair to man is but a sea; always unsteady and restless, sometimes turbulent and casting up mire and dirt. All is agitation, or if seemingly quiet, it is only a treacherous calm where the least breath of Satan may raise the angry waves of hatred and war: where at all times the passions of men openly or secretly are active against all that is good. And if ever the world could be compared to a sea it was when the Apostles began to preach the gospel. There was no stable belief of any kind. There were "gods many" presented to the mass for their worship. But the philosophers although at variance among themselves as to what truth was, or where to find it, looked with cold contempt upon the popular notions. The very priests of idolatry laughed in secret at the vulgar superstitions which they inculcated; and the people themselves, the *profanum vulgus* scorned by the educated few, transferred their idolatrous homage from one god to another as their own depraved desires led them. Nothing was certain, the past was shrouded in obscurity, the future was utter darkness, the present was only a lottery. A general professed belief in their gods, with perhaps an equally general secret denial. In a word, we cannot read the history of that period without seeing that atheism, violence, and corruption everywhere prevailed.

Into this confused and agitated sea the fishermen cast their nets. This is evidently the preaching of the gospel, the proclamation of God's salvation, of the name of Jesus. From the kingdom-point of view, it is not the actual salvation of all enclosed within the net, but a truth believed, a name confessed; salvation was there for those who truly believed and unfeignedly confessed, but many were found in that net who were rejected when it was brought to shore. All the enclosed are necessarily professors, but not real believers. The bad that are cast away are neither Jews, Pagans, nor

Mahometans, but those who have borne the name of Christ falsely.

The Apostles were the first fishermen sent to fish in the troubled and foul waters of this world. And in the power of the Holy Ghost they went into all the world. Paul could tell the Colossians that the truth of the gospel was come to them *as in all the world*. (Col. i. 6.) We possibly have but a limited notion of how far the gospel was preached in the first age. Many a place now fallen into worse than the previous darkness once enjoyed the light of the truth. Nevertheless the net was cast there, and there were many of every kind gathered, and in a certain modified sense we may say it was quickly brought to land. That is, we find in almost every Gentile city that the Apostles visited, a local assembly was founded, in which were seen those of every rank. It is one peculiar feature of the gospel, and which is in marked contrast with the law, that it speaks freely to all; to Greek as well as to Jew. And if to Greek, then to every condition of Greek as well as of Jew; to the low and wretched and outcast as well as to the better sort. We find from the inspired record that there were devout Jews and devout Gentiles—Cornelius and Lydia. There were honourable men and women at Berea who believed. Dionysius the Areopagite, and Damaris at Athens. At Thessalonica a great number of devout Greeks and of the chief women not a few. But we find also the persecutor and bigot—Saul of Tarsus. The ruffianly jailor of Philippi; the dealers in curious arts (witchcraft and sorcery) at Ephesus. Servants in Caesar's household and runaway slaves. In fact, there is abundant proof in the first days of the gospel that "they gathered of every kind."

Perhaps there is not a language or people upon earth which will not have its representative among those put into the vessels. We do know that in the great body of the redeemed there will be those of whom the elders sing, "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every *kindred and tongue, and people and nation.*"

If sin came into the world and broke up into diverse languages (Babel), and divided into distinct races the hitherto one family of man, and instilled hatred and hatefulness among them, the gospel brings them together again. And the King when He takes the kingdom will re-unite them, and they shall be under one rule and one Prince.

But the parable of the net does not give a picture of what the kingdom presented at the beginning, but rather of its appearance after it had been a certain time in existence. "Again the kingdom of the heavens is like to a seyne which has been cast into the sea, and which has gathered together of every kind, which, when it has been filled, having drawn up on the shore and sat down, they gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless out." (Lit. Translation.) Evidently the point of the parable is in the last clause, "*they gathered the good into vessels,*" all the former are but the condition or state of the kingdom, that is, all the previous events had taken place. The net *had been* cast, the fish caught *were drawn* to the shore; and the fishermen *were sitting down* separating the good from the bad. Clearly this is not the commencement but a subsequent stage of the history of the kingdom. I doubt not but that the end of the present time of the Lord's absence is before Him, though I should hesitate to refer the parable *exclusively* to the end. That which will be a distinguishing feature at the end may even now be discerned, namely, the sorting of the good from the bad. No sorting was needed at Pentecost, when the church and the kingdom were conterminous. It was not till the kingdom became a power *of* as well as *in* the world, and all sorts of evil like birds nestling in the branches of a tree, had found a home within it, that the separating the good from the bad became necessary.

When the Lord Jesus was about to leave His disciples, (Matt. xxviii.) He commanded them to go into all the world and to disciple all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. A Jew or a heathen when he professed belief in the doctrines of the Apostles, and was baptized, became outwardly a disciple, that is a professor. He at once entered within the limits of the kingdom, and came under all the responsibilities of his new position. He was enclosed within the net; a Christian by profession. Now the object of the mission committed to the Apostles, as recorded by Matthew (ch. xxviii), is to assert the rights of the Lord Jesus as Son of man. Rights which had been denied by the Jews. And not those merely over Israel as heir to the throne of David, but His power over all. For all power in heaven and in earth was now in His hand. The charge here given to the Apostles was not in virtue of His being Son of God, nor as being Head of the Church—for the Church supposes an

absent Lord, and there is no ascension here, no going away for a time—but it is in virtue of His title as Son of Man, which is now made good in resurrection; and thus He says, “all power is given to me,” and the Apostles go forth to disciple all *nations*, not to call individuals, which is rather a church-call (if we may so say). This is a call to submit to the authority of the King, and the ceremony of induction into the new relationship and duties was to baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Thus every baptized person has, so to speak, taken the oath of allegiance to the Lord Jesus as King, and if unconverted will be judged as a rebel against his rightful master. We of course do not say that this is all, or the most important truth that baptism implies; but it is an awful consideration for those who, outwardly confessing, in their heart deny Him.

This parable applies specially to the time when the tree and the leaven are in full development. But the kingdom does now at this present time present this appearance. It is Christendom. And there is presented to the wondering eye of man a system equally corrupt as that which it displaced, and far more offensive to God. This religious system which has given form and character to the kingdom raised the astonishment of John. (Rev. xvii.) But how comes it that this system which contains more evil than can be found in any other, unlike every other, has taken such firm hold of man? Mahometanism where it exists, does hold man tenaciously in its grasp; but it does not extend, nay, is showing evident symptoms of decay. On the contrary, this system which gives character to the kingdom flourishes. The answer is, because it pampers to the lusts of men, not less now than before. The vices of men may be in somewhat different shape, but they are still *lusts*. One reason why the new doctrine—for it was only dogma that was preached in corrupted Christendom, not the power of God to salvation—was because there was nothing of the looseness of opinion which bowed to this or that god as caprice, or worse, led the people. The doctrines of Christianity even when thoroughly leavened, offered in direct contrast with the vain speculations of philosophy, a fixity of creed, and a quasi-resting place for the tired and wearied mind. For whatever evil men joined to the Christianity of the word, there was an innate strength, an inherent cohesiveness which made itself felt even when

the saving power of the Word was denied. And in general, after the first opposition of pagan prejudice, communities and nations submitted to the new religion, and ended by becoming its zealous advocates and fierce supporters.

It is the way in which the dogmas of corrupt Christianity were made palatable to the natural man which accounts for its success. It was mainly the adoption of heathen feasts and ceremonies into the new system. The so-called Christian feasts of the Nativity and others were so arranged, that the time of their celebration should be the same as the pagan feasts. The clergy of the day seeking thus to wean the idolator from his paganism to the profession of Christianity; and the scheme was successful.

Some little change was made, the old idol was taken down, baptized, another name was given to it, and then it was put up into its old niche, its worship to be observed with the same scenes of lewdness and sin as was paid to it under the old pagan régime. Saints' festivals were instituted to replace the heathen. *Mary* superseded *Venus*; the temple of the goddess became the church of the virgin, in which not the old *sacerdos*, but the monk was the priest. The feast of the Nativity (commonly called Christmas) was changed to the end of December, in order to take the place of the Saturnalia; and so for other pagan orgies. The people did no longer resist the new doctrine when they were allowed their old practices. The mass became nominally Christian, in reality it remained idolatrous no less than before; nothing was changed but the name. The old evils were carried on, and sanctioned by the ministers of a system calling itself Christian, who pleaded necessity in order to secure the adhesion of the people.

This condition of man, so different from the sea into which the net of the gospel was first cast, is in part the result of the preached gospel. It is the effect of God's truth received by the natural man where the Spirit has not communicated divine life. Nothing else could be expected but that man having so much better material would work out a worse wickedness than before. Christendom will have a heavier judgment than heathendom.

(To be continued, D.V.)

FRAGMENT.—You never find a man ashamed of a false religion; yet you often find true Christians who have got the truth, and who are ashamed of it.

## CO-OPERATION WITH GOD.

I BELIEVE that God desires that we should understand every act and dealing of His grace with us. Human parents do much for their children without ever making known to them their intent and pleasure; therefore, much of the lives of children is spent, not in co-operation with their parents, but in misunderstanding their treatment, and in endeavouring to escape from it. Now, I think it is quite different with our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I believe a blessing either as to place or gift is often delayed, until we are intelligent enough to see something of its value. I think the Lord unfolds to His servants His gift as He attains to ability to comprehend it; and God acknowledges the exercise of gift and gives scope for it, according as there is intelligence to follow simply with His mind therein. How could a man think so as to be wise "as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith," (Rom. xii. 3) unless he knew the measure; and, therefore, if one is skilful in the word of righteousness, he is grown up and able to discern between the good and evil. If I am able to discern, I understand God's dealings with me, and get the blessing of it; if not, I am only a babe, unskilful in the word of righteousness. Solid food is unfit for me. I am alive, but with no sense or intelligence of God's ways with me. Now, I say that a want of this sense debars me from the present communication of God's mind and purpose. You would not talk to a babe about its inheritance; but as it gained sense you would speak to it and open your mind to it. This, I believe, God does in an especial manner.

I have hitherto only referred to distinct blessings, but it is the same, though in a lesser degree in chastening—you ought to be exercised thereby—no good comes from it if you are not; you must get your Father's mind about it. I do not say that He does not chasten unless you understand the good of it. I believe He often chastens to vindicate His own care, when His child does not notice it at all; but no child who knows His love will be satisfied to let His chastening pass by unexplained. If an earthly friend indicates any coolness or distance towards me, do I not seek an explanation of it in proportion as I love Him? Just so, according to our value of the love of God shall we seek for an explanation of any marked visitation from Him. I

think we see it more plainly in blessings; it will be the wise virgins, with trimmed lamps, who go forth to meet the Bridegroom. It is to him "that hath shall be given." In the parable of the pounds, the man who made the most, got more than he who had made less. God unfolds according as we are prepared for it, and hence circumstances and occurrences are often used to prepare us for a due appreciation of His blessings. Thus Paul in the prison at Rome, and John at Patmos, were through circumstances prepared—the one, to reveal the heavenly glory in heaven—the other, the Lord's glory on earth. When Jonah lost the gourd, he was able to understand God's feelings; when *prepared* to hear them, they are imparted to Him. God wants us to know the way whereby we go, and to be "filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. i. 9.)

I do not believe that any soul, no matter how great its acquisition of knowledge from the Scriptures, has really got on morally beyond its intelligence of God's ways with itself. I mean, that as far as you understand God's ways with you, so far have you been taught of Him—this is the measure of your attainment. If you understand His ways with you in the wilderness, then you are in the wilderness; if in heavenly places, then you are in heavenly places, and so on.

You will remark that, often at meetings or otherwise, a spiritual desire, like a flash of light, engages your soul. You may in some degree remember how you liked it; but you find that practically you have not reached it—you are not prepared for it. I have no doubt that the grapes of Eshcol are often tasted by us, but it takes a good deal of exercise and intelligence before we reach Eshcol; and when we do reach it, we see how necessary it was for us to go through so much exercise and toil of spirit, for now we comprehend the excellence of the blessing, and we are in **it**—in the place of it. To be in the place of blessing, you must not only feel that you prize the blessing, but you must also feel that you are suited to the place, and therefore necessarily separated from what is unsuited to it. It is not in a moment that we see how the idolatry of our hearts stands in the way as a barrier to our reaching the place or possession of the grapes, the taste and excellence of which we feel we appreciate; chastening falls on us in order to remove the obstacles and prepare us, as Caleb was, after forty years,

for the possession of Eshcol; and surely when he was in full possession, his heart acknowledged God's grace to him; he comprehended the nature, order, and value of the blessing he had so long before tasted of; he could then "sing with the understanding."

There can be no "basket"—see Deut. xxvi.—unless we understand our blessings; and hence the prayer, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height. (Eph. iii. 17, 18.)"

The Lord give us to understand the nature and value of His blessings, that we may be suited to enjoy them suitably.

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### "THE LORD JEHOVAH IS BECOME MY STRENGTH AND MY SONG."

Ps. xliii. 4; Hab. iii. 18; Rom. v. 11.

Oh God, in Thee I joy!  
For "whom have I in heaven but Thee,"  
I would desire none else but Thee,  
It is *Thyself* I long to see,  
"God, my exceeding joy."

Oh God, in Thee I joy;  
What though my path be dark and drear,  
It matters nought when Thou art near,  
Thy presence calms each doubt and fear,  
"God my exceeding joy."

Oh God, in Thee I joy;  
And bright before me shines the dawn  
Of *one* triumphant, glorious morn,  
When sin and woe will all be gone,  
"God, my exceeding joy."

My God, in Thee I joy,  
And up above this world's rude din  
I would press forward *Christ* to win,  
And find my only portion in  
"God, my exceeding joy."

My God, in Thee I joy;  
Under Thy wings may I abide,  
And in Thy shadow may I hide  
Until, *like Thee*, I'm "*satisfied*,"  
"God, my exceeding joy."

My God, in Thee I joy,  
And Thou dost take me by the hand  
To lead me to the Heavenly strand,  
Where all my hopes on Thee will land,  
"God, my exceeding joy."

C. A. W.

## THE REMNANT TESTIMONY.

“Who hath despised the day of small things?”—Zec. iv. 10.

**THE** testimony which the Lord’s people are called to maintain in these last days has a twofold character.

First :—The unity of the Church—the body of Christ—constituted by the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven at Pentecost ; and,

Second :—The character of a Remnant who have emerged from the ruin and devastation into which the Church has lapsed, who are maintaining this testimony with uncompromising purpose and devotedness of heart.

To this Remnant character I desire to draw the attention of my readers, and to trace from Scripture some of the characteristics which distinguished the faithful from time to time, in periods of declension from the first calling of God ; or marked the paths of individuals who typify or personate a remnant in days of failure and ruin. They afford much instruction and example, as well as warning, to those who now through mercy occupy this grave and yet deeply blessed place.

We shall find another feature, too, of marked and painful interest ; *i.e.*, how soon failure came in and energy flagged, after the first fine efforts of faith, which had extricated itself from corruption, and returned to a divine position. Alas, man fails—the saints fail in the things of God in every way. Still there is no failure which can break the link of faith with the power of God ; and the brightest exhibitions of faith are ever found where all around is darkest. It is not to serve or love the saints of God, to sink to their level, and be submerged in the confusion. We never can cope with the evil that has flowed in by letting go first principles. In no place do we find such strong injunctions to hold them fast as when all was darkest, and the failure most apparent. Witness Paul’s instructions in 2 Timothy : “Hold fast the form of sound words.” “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” “Continue in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them,” &c. He serves the Lord’s people best who, while he follows them as long as there is an ear to hear, never himself loses his liberty, or enfeebles the truth by identity with that which is not according to God. A Gideon must first throw down the altar of Baal before “Abi-ezer” is gathered

after him. A Lot may preach true things to his circle, but it was truth without the power of God, because he had not first extricated himself from Sodom: "He seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law." (Gen. xix.)

It is clear that there must first have been the calling of God announced and accepted; something set up of God from which the general mass had departed, in order that there should be a holding fast of the fundamental calling, by a remnant; or a return to original principles, when all had lost the divine place of testimony.

I think that the first remnant having this character, is Caleb and Joshua.

When God came down to deliver Israel out of Egypt He announced His purpose to Moses in Exodus iii. 8, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Here was the purpose distinctly enunciated. Not one word about "the great and terrible wilderness" which lay between. I pass over their deliverance and subsequent history till we come to the moment when Israel, about two years after, were to go up to the mount of the Amorites and take possession of the land of Canaan. Their faith was not up to the call of the Lord, and they begged that some should be sent to spy out the land. To this the Lord assented, commanding that twelve men—out of every tribe a man—(see Numbers xiii.; Deut. i.) should go up. Amongst them were "Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." The spies returned with a good report of the land; but ten of them caused the unbelief of the heart of Israel to manifest itself by their own fears. At this critical moment we find Israel slipping away from the call of Jehovah, and the solemn words were then spoken, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." They "despised" the pleasant land! Here one of these two faithful men—men of "another spirit"—who had "wholly followed the Lord God of Israel," stilled the people with his words, "*If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.*" He "held fast" the calling and purpose of Jehovah at this critical moment. Israel had to go back and wander for the rest of the forty years in the desert, till all the men of war died that came out of Egypt. They, too, had to

accompany them in their sorrow and toil, yet not in their sin. But there was not one in that great company who with more firm unflinching tread and cheerful heart wandered for that forty years. True to the purpose and call of God they hoped for what they saw not, and in patience waited for it. They got their portion in the land they looked for when the time came; and the testimony of Moses was that "he wholly followed the Lord." (Joshua xiv. 8-14.)

In Ruth we get a touching picture of what a remnant should be. Her history lay in the dark day of Israel's ruin in the time when the judges ruled; Israel had proved totally faithless to their calling; and the Philistines devastated the land of Jehovah; and every man did what seemed right in his own eyes. (Judges xxi. 25.) The first associations of the poor Moabitess with Naomi were in the day of her prosperity and gladness of heart. But Naomi's dark day came; the widow of Israel—a widow in heart and fact—Naomi (now become "Mara"—"Bitterness,") set out to return to the land of Israel. Joys and relationships which once she knew had gone by for ever. Ruth, a widow in heart too, as in circumstances, clave to Naomi. She had known her in her prosperous day, and in the day of her sorrow she made the widow of Israel the object of all her care. She could not restore the past to her—it was gone for ever. But she devotes herself in the present to this widowed heart, and follows her, thoughtless of self, to the land of Israel. "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried!" But the day of reward and recognition came. To her question to Boaz, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" The answer was, "It hath fully been shewed me *all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law.*" This was the ground of her reward. If we have glimpsed what the church was in the day of her Pentecostal blessedness, and discovered that the divine principles then enunciated have never changed, shall not our language be in the dark day of her shame and ruin, "Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people," &c. If the poverty of our services are not worthy of recognition when the day of reward shall come, we shall have the satisfaction and joy to know that we bestowed all

(shall we say?) our attention and care on that for which Christ gave Himself, that He might sanctify and cleanse her, and present to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. (Eph. v. 25-27.)

I turn to a darker day of Israel's history. The ten tribes had long since gone away captive to Assyria. Judah had filled up the measure of the long-suffering of Jehovah, and had gone captive to Babylon. Jerusalem was solitary, devastated, and in ruins, and the land was wasted and without an inhabitant. Hardly a trace that it was Jehovah's now remained; but that it was keeping its Sabbaths—not from the faith of the people, but because upon the people had been written “Lo ammi.” (Hos. i.) Far away in the land of the Chaldean a faithful heart might sigh and open his window and pray—straining his eyes towards the long-loved city; and confess as his own the sins of his people. (Dan. vi., ix.) By the rivers of Babylon, too, those who could sigh and cry for the abominations which were wrought in the house of God at Jerusalem; could hang up their harps on the willows, and refuse to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. How could He be worshipped unless in that spot which He had chosen? There was but one spot where they could strike their harps to His praise! “By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; yea we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song: and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?” (Psalm cxxxvii.) In the book of Ezra we find a remnant of the people extricating themselves from Babylon, and returning to a divine position before the Lord. Care lest any but those whose title was distinctly of Israel, should be mixed up with the work of the Lord marked these faithful men. They did not disown them as of Israel, but they could not recognize their claim. *God* might discern them as His; *they* could not pretend to divine discernment when they had not the Urim and the Thummim (see Ezra ii. 59—63). In this we have an instructive lesson for our own day.

When the church was in divine order each took his place, like the priesthood of Israel, without question as to title to be there. But meanwhile Israel had become mixed up in the corruptions of Babylon, and disorder reigned supreme.

When Paul contemplates the total disorder of things in the church which never could be remedied (2 Tim.), he instructs the remnant who had departed from iniquity, and purged themselves from the vessels to dishonour in the Babylon of the professing Church (ch. ii. 19—22), to “follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that *call on the Lord, out of a pure heart.*” They did not deny that those who were still in the corruption were children of God, but they had not extricated themselves from the evils there; and, if knowing the corruption, they had not departed from it, the conscience was defiled and the heart impure. The remnant are careful then only to walk with those who call on the Lord “*out of a pure heart.*”

But the seventh month came (Ezra iii.), the moment for the *gathering* of the people (the Feast of Trumpets). The remnant gathered themselves “as one man” in the only divine city in the world—the only platform where they could take down, so to say, those long silent, unstrung harps from the willows, and worship Israel’s God! They might *pray* with the window open toward Jerusalem, and *confess* their sins in Babylon, but they could not *worship* Him there. It was impossible to re-construct the order of things as they had been in Solomon’s day—that day had passed away for ever! The ark was gone—*where*, none could tell. The glory had departed from Israel—and the sword was in the Gentile hand. The Urim and Thummim was amongst the things of the past. Yet outside all these things which belonged to a day of order, the Lord had not forgotten those faithful men, and His word and Spirit remained. “They built an altar to the *God of Israel*”—though all Israel was not there. They did not pretend to be “Israel”—yet they could contemplate all Israel, and in Israel’s city worship Israel’s God, in the way that Israel’s God had written. As a remnant who had escaped they occupied this divine platform, and sang the praise of Jehovah: “O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever.” That chorus had been sung in the bright day of David’s success: when he brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xvi. 41). It had again resounded when the house of the Lord at Jerusalem was filled with the cloud and glory of His manifested presence in the days of Solomon. (2 Chron. v. 13.) When the glory and brightness and successes of

those days had passed away, and the failure and ruin of Israel was complete, the returned remnant could raise the very same old note of praise, "O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever!" (Ezra iii. 11). They had been faithless, but He was faithful. The fathers of Israel who had seen the house of the Lord before the captivity, could weep when they thought of the unfaithfulness of the people. The younger ones could sing with joy when they celebrated the faithfulness of the Lord. The weeping and the rejoicing were both good—to weep was right, when they thought of the failure of the people to Jehovah; but to rejoice was right, when they thought of the faithfulness of God.

Others, too, who called upon the same Lord, as they said, claimed the right of being with them in the work. (ch. iv.) But this could not be. They who were careful that even a priest of Israel who could not show his genealogy should not eat of the holy things in the day of extrication from Babylon, were careful too that those who had mixed up the fear of Jehovah with the service of idols should have nothing to do with them in His work. It was not a question with them of having people together; but, with widowed hearts as to the past, their fixed purpose remained to strengthen the things that remained, but to strengthen them according to God—refusing all co-operation with those who could not have the same end in view in the Lord's testimony. Thus it was pure and unmingled; 1st, To Israel as it had been—God's separated people on the earth; and, 2nd, This testimony maintained by a remnant whose sole trust was in God and whose guide was His word.

All this has its instructive lesson for us. The unity of the church remains. It is maintained by the Spirit of God. Tongues have gone—apostolic power has gone—signs have passed away; and healings and gifts of adornment to call the attention of the world. Still the word of God abides. To it God has directed us in the last days. Were the tongues, &c., here now, the word would apply, for "the word of the Lord abideth for ever." But they have all gone. Still the faithful can take that word and walk in obedience to it, when all those things of the former glory of the church have passed away for ever. The remnant extricated from Babylon, as it were, and gathered together to the name of the Lord (Matt. xviii. 20), on the divine basis

and never-failing principle of the church's existence—"one body and one Spirit" (Eph. iv. 4)—do not by this pretend to be "the church of God;" that would be to forget that there are children of God still scattered in the Babylon around. They can set up nothing—reconstruct nothing. But they can remember that "He that is holy, He that is true; He that shutteth and no man openeth, and openeth and no man shutteth," is with them. He is ever to be trusted and counted upon. If He sends a prophet or a help amongst them, they can thank God, and accept it as a token of His favour and grace—they can appoint none. To do so would be to forget the total ruin which never can be restored, and to presume to do that for which they had no warrant in the Word of God.

If a fresh action of the Spirit of God causes a Nehemiah-like company to follow from Babylon, they are glad to welcome them to the divine ground they occupy themselves. If the Nehemiah-like company comes, they find *before them* a remnant who had previously through grace occupied the divine position. They must gladly and cheerfully fall in with what God had wrought—there was no neutral ground—no second place. They dare not set up another, it would be but schism. It was the same Spirit who had wrought, and who, if followed, could not but guide them to the same divine position to which He had guided others. How completely this sets aside the will of man; and the independency of the movements of the present day which stop short of that position to which God has called His people together to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" for "there is one body and one Spirit," and only one!

I pass on to another interesting scene when a faithful one is standing fast alone, afar from all fellowship with his brethren, where his testimony is rather the refusal to act so as to deny fundamental truth, than actively to engage himself with others in extricating themselves from iniquity. I allude to the case of Mordecai the Jew. (Esther.)

Far away from the land of Israel, the people were subject to the powers of the world. An Amalekite, named Haman, wielded the power next to that of the king. A poor Jew, "an exile in the strange land," refused to bow his head to the Agagite. To be faithful, when all were unfaithful, is a great thing in God's eye. "Thou hast not denied my name," is great commendation when all were doing so. To keep

one's Nazariteship in secret with God, when no eye sees but His, is never forgotten. To stand firmly for Him in an evil day of temptation, is to do great things! "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal," shows that God's eye saw and valued their faith, where even Elijah had not discerned them. They had refused to do that which all others had done, in that dark day.

Mordecai was ready to give a reason of the hope that was in him; and his simple answer was, *I am a Jew!* God had not forgotten His oath of old (Exod xvii.), even if Israel were reaping the fruit of their sins under the Eastern Kings. He had said, "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, when thou wast faint and weary, and he feared not God. . . . Thou shalt not forget it." (Deut. xxv.) Therefore the Lord had sworn that He would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. Mordecai refuses to surrender this fundamental truth in the calling of Israel. You may say, he is a stiff-necked man, and is imperilling the lives of his nation. I admit it: but his trust is in God! Firmly did this man trusting in God, and refusing to surrender fundamental truth, stand single-handed against all the malice of the enemy. Post after post was despatched with the orders to smite all the Jews. Still no faltering in his faith—his head bowed not as the son of Amalek passed by! He had counted upon God, whose word never alters; and God had tried his faith, but it stood the test; and, when the day comes for having faithfulness owned, it will be found, through grace, that Mordecai had had an opportunity for faithfulness to the Lord—that he had stood firm, and God has not forgotten it.

What cheer of heart his story must afford to those whose path is isolated; when they have not even one faithful companion, yet are enabled in an evil day to be firm and faithful in their solitary pathway, sustained and owned by God.

In Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, we find another striking example. Faithfulness and standing fast in trial and temptation shows the power of the Spirit, quite as much as energy in action. They were at this time captives in Babylon; the necessity of faithfulness seemed to

have passed away. Where was the profit of standing fast when all their hopes were gone? But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat, or his wine. He would drink water, and eat pulse, and nothing more. He kept his Nazariteship in the land of captivity; and he kept it according to the thoughts of God; (compare Ezekiel iv. 9—13) and the time came when God stood by him, and made him the vessel of His mind and will, revealing to him the history of the times and end of the Gentile in whose grasp he was for his nation's sin.

I might go on with many other examples; such as Jeremiah, the Five wise Virgins, &c., &c.; but I pass on to notice another solemn lesson. How soon the thing failed, and the energy flagged which supported the emerging remnant in extricating themselves from the evil, and regaining a divine position. Failure and weakness thus ensued once more—it is a sad but common case. You will often see the lovely efforts of faith struggling to win a divine position through difficulties and dangers and trials without end. Yet when the goal is won, the zeal grows cool, self is remembered, God forgotten, and the blessing is gone. Alas! one trembles, when one sees these first lovely efforts of faith, lest the day should come when they are seen no more. It is much harder to *keep* what we have won in divine things than to *win*, because it must be by the winner abiding in the energy by which he won. The fear of man comes. Self-interest, self-sparing, and self-indulgence enter. God in mercy interposes at times, and stirs up the sleeping energy, and is ever ready to bless; still it is painful and humbling to think of it. We see a sad example of this in Israel when gaining the land under Joshua, and then sinking into premature decay.

It comes out strikingly in the after history of this returned remnant in Ezra, &c., to which I have referred. The fear of man stopped the work of the Lord. (Ezra iv. 4, 5, 24.) The energy and beauty of their first efforts of faith were gone. God sends the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to the work of the Lord. They had began to settle in their hearts that the time had not come to build the Lord's house (Hag. i. 2.); yet they had ceiled their own. Thus stirred up, we find that they obeyed the voice of the Lord, and did the work of the Lord. The fear of man gave place to the fear of the Lord; and God was there to own and bless the renewed efforts of faith.

If we follow their history, we find their faith again grew dim. In Malachi the state of things is painful and depressing. The blind ones of the flock, and the sick, and the lame, were offered in sacrifice to Jehovah. What man refused—what was worthless to him, was good enough for God! Even Saul, in his worst day, reserved the *best* of the sheep and oxen to do sacrifice to the Lord. No one would open the doors of the Lord's house for nothing, nor light a fire on His altar for nought (ch. i. 7—10). They robbed God in tithes and offerings (ch. iii. 8); called the proud happy; and said, "It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" This, too, sad to tell it, when *in* a divine position. It was not when far away in the land of the Chaldean, but in the city of the great King! Still we find *a remnant within a remnant*, if I may so say, faithful to the Lord. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." The faithfulness of the few was the channel of sustainment to the others from a faithful God. We trace them further, till we find them in Luke ii. represented by old Simeon and Anna, who knew "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." The same faith that could keep them waiting for the Lord's Christ, could keep them alive till He came. The old prophetess, too, who could fast and pray, and live for, and in that spot which still was owned of God, found her fastings and prayers ended in praise, when the Lord she had looked for came. The last link in the history of this returned remnant we find in the solitary widow of Luke xxi. A few verses further on in this chapter the Lord pronounces the final judgment on that temple at Jerusalem. It was still, however, in a certain sense, owned of God. This widowed heart had but one object now on earth—she could do but little, for all she possessed was a farthing! "Two mites," as the Spirit of God lets us know. Devotedness, in the estimate of man, would have been great indeed if she had appropriated half of what she possessed to the interests of God which engrossed her. But self was forgotten with this widowed heart, and she cast into the offerings of the Lord her two mites. The Lord's eye saw the motive from which this offering sprang, read the action as

He alone could read it: "Of a truth," said He, "I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." He judged aright—but He did not judge by what she gave, but by *what she kept*; and that was nothing! It is humbling to trace this decay of the mass, yet touching to contemplate the increased and increasing devotedness and purpose of those true hearts; but it is useful to face the dangers from which we are never free. Worldliness amongst us; self-seeking, and forgetfulness of the things of the Lord, all are amongst us, and are signs and sources of weakness. The Lord grant us to be warned, and to distrust ourselves the more. The Lord encourage the hearts of those who love His name and testimony to be increasingly faithful. To keep the eye filled with Christ, and thus to be still more the channel of the Lord's sustaining grace to the rest, till that bright and longed-for day arrives when He will come and gladden our hearts for ever!

It is easy to remark how in all those times of failure and ruin, the hearts of others were stirred up by some faithful one, in self-sacrificing energy, who would pray and work—and sigh and cry—who could spend and be spent on the Lord's interests at the time. Through such the Lord wrought and delivered, and led and blessed His people. It might be by some lone widow who could agonize in prayers and fastings night and day. The answer came, and the blessing was poured out, and none knew what the occasion was through which the blessing came. But in the day when "every man shall have praise of God" it will be known; for His eye marked it and answered it, and that heart was, perhaps, unwittingly, in communion with His—the vessel for the intercession of the Spirit for the saints according to the will of God!

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#### FRAGMENT.

"No direction to leave any of the Seven Churches," says some one. There is no individual direction to do anything in them but to "listen," I reply. What we get in them is what *Christ* will do, not what *I* am to do; that I get elsewhere. I don't want to be spued out of Christ's mouth. Do you?

## THYATIRA, SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA.

PHILADELPHIA.—REV. III. 7-13.

IN Philadelphia we find another state of things connected with the coming of the Lord. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true,"—we have not had this before. These two characters are attached to Christ; and, then, "Behold I come quickly." First you get *holiness*, and *truth*, and then *power*; "He that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth, I know thy works." What are they? He does not tell what they are. *He* says he knows them, and for faith that is enough. "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." No one can hinder His having His sheep out to follow Him, "for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." Here I get what specially characterizes the saint who lays hold on Christ; he has "a little strength,"—but he *has* it; not great power—not forcing the door open—it is open for us, and Christ says, I will take care that no one shall shut it. Christ Himself manifested outwardly but very little strength, yet "to him the porter openeth;" and now He opens it for us; and, no matter how feeble the instrument may be, His promise is, "I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that *I have loved thee.*" You may have very little strength, but if you walk before me, even in feebleness, they shall know that "*I have loved thee.*" Are you satisfied with that? Christ is holy and He is true, and faith is called to walk in expectation of His coming. There is no thought of great strength, but a little strength and an open door, "Because thou hast kept the word of *my* patience." See how Christ associates the saints with Himself, "the word of *my* patience," while He waits; that is the thing which even a child may do. It is Christ's word, a child might keep that. I have no other word to look to—no other authority. We should be thankful for gift when we meet it, but Christ's word alone is sufficient. If we have not that we have nothing. Any other word is not worth a breath, because it is the breath of man. You may say it is ancient—let it be ever so ancient, it is not as ancient as Christ, and I will have nothing to do with it. I must have "that which was from the beginning." "Thou hast kept my word, and hast *not denied my name.*" Doing

this may seem a poor thing, humanly speaking; but *to be faithful when all are faithless is a great thing!*

The cry of the bridegroom's coming awoke all the virgins (Matt. xxv.), and there was time enough before He came to test their faith, and put each class in its true place, but only they who were "ready" went in with him to the marriage. So is it with us, the Son is testing us now by the word of His patience, He is now "expecting" till His enemies are made His footstool. (Heb. x. 13). When that will take place no one knows—you go and act in the power of the Holy Ghost until He comes. It is a blessed thing to know that if we have to wait, that He is waiting—it is *His* patience. "Now you must wait, and I must wait, and you have only just got to wait as long as I am waiting, and then I will come and receive you unto myself."

Note how the word "my" runs through the whole thing—how Christ associates us with Himself. "Ye have need of patience, that *after* ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." (Heb. x. 36). God knows how long He may still delay, but it is one of the characteristics of true faith that it lasts out to the end! Flesh may go on apparently right a long way. Samuel told Saul to wait for seven days at Gilgal till he came to him (1 Sam. x. 8), but he only waited six days and a half, or so, and thereby lost the kingdom! (1 Sam. xiii. 8). Had he kept the commandment of the Lord and waited, his kingdom would have been established for ever. But he had not the faith that can wait. Where faith is, it knows it can do nothing without God, and must wait till God comes in.

"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." Those who have even a little strength will be kept from that dreadful time. It is to try them that *dwell* on the earth—this characterizes them. *We* are strangers and pilgrims on earth but *dwellers* in heaven—"seated in heavenly places in Christ."

Here we have not the kingdom as in Thyatira; or, "I will come on thee as a thief," as in Sardis. But see how He comforts them, "Behold I come quickly;" and so the heart is cheered. We must wait for Christ keeping His word *till He comes*. It is a dark and dreary world through which we have to pass, but it is in the night that, when all around is

darkness, if I see a light it seems the nearest thing to me. Is this so with you as to Him who is the bright and morning star? Is He indeed seen in the dark night of this world, as the nearest and brightest object before your hearts? None of us know how soon He will come. I believe it is false in principle, as well as in fact, to try to ascertain the time of His coming. Counting of times and dates all belong to Jewish things, and there is no use in counting them. They can be no help to us as to marking the time when He will appear. No one knows the moment He may come, but the heart has got this—His own word—“Behold I come quickly.” It is the immediate hope which Paul said the saints should expect. Some may say, Did not Paul make a mistake when he directed the saints to wait for God’s Son from heaven? A mistake! Why, he is going to get the brightest crown in heaven for believing it! Has Paul lost anything by being with the Lord before He comes? When He comes Paul will come with Him. No, the thought kept them from setting their minds on the world—kept them waiting. If your heart says, “He is coming quickly,” you will not lose anything; though “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;” it will give you a character as a waiting people.

“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.” How thorough is the saint’s association with Christ! He will make him a pillar who just now has but “a little strength.” But it is ever so, when weakness is apparent strength is found. “The weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men.” What are we? What can we be in the things of God? Simply nothing!—but that is the time that God is everything. What are you? Nothing—subject to death. Can you reveal God to a soul? What can you do? God may speak to the heart through you, but in yourself you are simply nothing; but it is just in the measure in which we *are* nothing that there is strength for us in Christ.

Look at Gilgal in the history of Israel. What was Gilgal? the place where they were putting down the flesh in death; where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Circumcision was typical of death to the flesh; they were there in weakness. We see that time after time Joshua and all Israel *returned* to Gilgal—it was their abiding place. The book of

Joshua, looked at typically, is a description of the spiritual triumphs of the Lord over His spiritual enemies. Judges gives the history of the failure of Israel in putting out the evil. You have not a word about the angel of the Lord in Joshua; you get the angel when you come to Judges; (chap. ii.) we read, "And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim"—*i.e.*, tears. "And when the angel spake those words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept, and they called the name of that place Bochim, and they sacrificed there unto the Lord." They worshipped with tears. It was Gilgal lost, and Bochim gained; but this was not the true circumcision of Christ—death to the flesh and the world in the power of resurrection. The camp was at Gilgal; there was always a taking away of strength when the Israelites did not return there. It is very well to see the true state of things when there was no strength. We have always to return to Gilgal—even if you have been gaining victories, you must get back to self-judgment, which strengthens the heart and separates it to Christ. If not, you will get some Achan to trouble you, as they did when they went out against Ai and were beaten. They had not *felt* weakness, and did not inquire of the Lord. God could not go out with them and thus put His seal upon the wickedness which was amongst them. The secret of all strength is, "the Lord is with thee." The Lord said to Joshua, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life, as I was with Moses so I will be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." He promised success and blessing—"only be thou strong and very courageous." (Josh. i. 5-7.) In contrast to this, they "could not stand before their enemies." (Chap. vii. 12.) We find the character of the strength Christ gives when He says to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul was caught up to the third heaven; did that make him strong? on the contrary the flesh would puff him up, and say, "now Paul, nobody ever was there but you." He could not even tell what he had heard or seen there. Must he be brought to a fourth heaven to sanctify him more? No, he is made to feel his weakness—that is not strength; no, but it is the emptying of strength—the *condition* in which we get strength—so that we can say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Cor. xii. 10.) "I glory in my weakness." Paul needed "a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet

him ;" something to make him despicable in the presence of others. *Whenever there is conscious strength there is sure to be real weakness; but when we are consciously weak and dependent there is real strength!* Christ's grace is sufficient for us when we are consciously nothing.

That is the character of Christ, "He was crucified in weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God, for we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God." (2 Cor. xiii. 4). It is so in every step of our path, He identifies us with Himself.

"He shall go no more out." (verse 12). It is a common case for good men to be cast out *here*—their names cast out as evil,—but *there* they shall "go no more out." "And I will write upon him the name of *my* God, and the name of the city of *my* God, which cometh down out of heaven from *my* God, and I will write upon him *my* new name." Remark the word "*my*," the complete and thorough association of Christ's heart with the weak believer. I will inscribe upon him my new name; he has been identified with my weakness when all was failure; he shall be identified with my glory when all is strength and joy! You may have been cast out here below for my name, but up there you shall go no more out for ever. People may judge you harshly, but if you are keeping the word of Christ's patience, it is joy when He says, "I have loved thee;" are you content with that? Is Christ's approbation the thing that satisfies your heart in this world of trial, difficulty, and conflict? Is that the thing that cheers and satisfies you in this scene of confusion? Is it enough for you to say I have Christ's word—I know He loves me, and that by and bye I shall go no more out for ever?

The Lord give us, beloved friends, not to have that day come on us unawares; but to have His testimony, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience I also will keep thee." Perilous times have come, but we have got His word, He casts us upon it; we have all the immediate affections of Christ with us, it is His patience. He is the waiting Bridegroom, waiting to have His bride with Him, who should be waiting for Him. He is waiting with patience, though I am sure He has much more love in His heart for us than we have in our poor hearts for Him. "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Amen.

## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

“M. A. W.”—You ask for explanation as to the Covenant or Testament (*διαθηκη*) of Gal. iii. 17, and Heb. viii., ix.; and if *we* are under the new covenant, or any covenant at all?

In Gal. iii. 15-29, we have the relationship between law and promise discussed as to how they stand one to another. Unconditional promise was made of God to Abraham 430 years *before* the law, and law then coming in with its conditions could not set aside the unconditional promises. Moreover, in the law there were two parties and a mediator; in promise there was but one—God Himself, acting from Himself, and requiring no conditional terms. One was a contract, the other was grace. Read v. 16, thus: “Now to Abraham were the promises made (Gen. xii.), and to his seed;” *i.e.*, Christ risen, as Isaac, in figure, raised from the dead (Gen. xxii.); where God ratified the previously-given covenant (c. xii., xv.), by His oath, to which no conditions were attached whatever. v. 17, “And this I say, the covenant previously ratified by God to Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul,” &c. The law was added, “for the sake of transgressions,” but did not disannul the previous purpose of God, while testing man.

There are really but two covenants in Scripture—the old covenant and the new. Still the word covenant is used in several places in connection with the Lord, when it is but the enunciation of certain relationships into which He was pleased to enter with man or the creature (Gen. ix. 8-17, &c.), or to be approached by him, but without conditions. The context must decide the sense.

In Hebrews viii., ix., He shows the setting aside of the old covenant, and the introduction of a second, *yet* to be made with Judah and Israel. Meanwhile a Mediator is introduced previous to the time when Israel and Judah are again in the land. This Mediator has shed the blood necessary for its establishment, but has not yet established it—the party concerned not yet being under this dealing of God; *i.e.*, Israel and Judah. If Jeremiah xxxi. 31-40 be read, where the new covenant is enunciated, it will be seen that no mediator is named. Christ having been rejected when He came to fulfil the *promises* made to the fathers, sheds His blood and goes on high, and all direct dealings with Israel

are suspended, while all necessary for its ultimate establishment has been accomplished. In Matt. xxvi. 28, He says: "This is my blood of the new covenant;" not, This is the new covenant, but the "the blood" of it. The covenant itself has not yet been established.

Hence in Hebrews, while the writer shows the passing away of the old, and introduction of the new, he never shows its application as a present thing. The only two blessings of the new covenant which we get, as Christians, are forgiveness of sins, and direct teaching from God. Christians are not under a covenant in any wise. They have to do with the Mediator of it while hidden in the heavens before He renews His relationship with Judah and Israel, to whom alone the covenant pertains. See Jer. xxxi. 31; Heb. viii. 8-12.

Hence, too, in Heb. ix. 15, he says: "For this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance;" not, the establishment of the new covenant, but "eternal inheritance," as having to do with the Mediator Himself whose blood had been shed.

It is striking the way the writer avoids the application of the new covenant to Christians while speaking of it with reference to Judah and Israel, and at the same time appropriates to the former the two blessings which flow from it to them.

Verses 16 and 17 are a parenthesis. They show that even in human things a testament has no force as long as the testator lives. Death comes, and then it is valid. It is the same word, but used distinctly in this sense.

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H. D. L.—What is the "reward" in Col. ii. 18?

The passage might be rendered, "Let none circumvent you," or "cheat you." That is, as if he said, Do not allow things to get an entrance into your mind, so that you would be cheated out of that which Christianity had given you, in Christ, by voluntary humility, &c. There is no special separate word for "reward" in the passage, but the word is required to get at the full sense of the verb. The words I give in italics are all used to express one word in the original language, viz., "*Let no man beguile you of your reward.*" It is not used in any other place in Scripture.

“Lie not one to the other.” (Col. iii. 9)?

The Christian as dead and risen with Christ, and as having put off the old man with his deeds, is to act in the truth of this, and disallow and refuse every movement of the flesh, the untruthfulness of which is unchanged, even by a new life in Christ risen. The life which he possesses in Christ is to be seen, and it only. If the believer is “in Christ” on high, Christ is in him below, and His responsibility is that “Christ” should be seen, and never anything else but “Christ.”

It is the practice of a Christian who is dead and risen with Christ dealing with his members, and refusing the action of the old man, because he *is* dead. He is never told that he has to die to sin in Scripture, but to act upon the great fact that he is dead with Christ, and his life is hid with Christ in God. This life is to be seen on earth in his mortal body.

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“Who were the five foolish virgins.” Matt. xxv.?

They are all those who profess the name of Christ. It is the *profession of Christianity*, not exactly the Church *as such*. When all are awakened by the midnight cry, reality was found in the five wise virgins as well as profession. They had the Holy Ghost, of which the oil is the symbol. The others had no oil. It was with the foolish, profession, or religiousness without vitality. The door was shut, and they were shut out for ever! Lost, I do not doubt.

It is a grave mistake to misapply this parable to the remnant of Jews in the “time of the end.” They have not the Holy Ghost dwelling in them at all, as the believer has now; even a babe in Christ has this. (1 Jno. ii. 20.) If they were not professing Christians, they would not be charged with having no “oil.” Nor does the godly Jew go forth to meet the Bridegroom; he flees in terror. It is not with him the Bridegroom in hope, but the abomination of desolation in fear. There will be no time of slumbering and sleeping then, for things will reel to their centre in judgment.

Chapters xxiv. and xxv. have three great subject divisions—a characteristic of Matthew’s Gospel. 1st. The desolation and final restoration of the Jews as a nation on the earth. (xxiv. 1-44.) 2nd. Under three parables, instructions as to those who would be attached by profession to the Lord during His absence, and until His return (xxiv. 45-51; xxv. 1-30); *i.e.*, professing Christians. 3rd. The result to the Gentiles

as to their reception or rejection of the testimony the Lord gives them, as to His claims and kingdom; or, in other words, the judgment of the quick or living nations at His establishing the kingdom. In this scene you find three parties—Jews—His "brethren;" Gentiles who are blessed—the sheep; Gentiles who are condemned—the goats. This is not the judgment of the dead, but of the living (xxv. 31-46), at the beginning of the millennium. The dead are not judged till the close.

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### "HIS OWN."

John xiii. 1.

"His own," how sweet the portion,  
 His people thence can claim,  
 Though in the world, not of it,  
 Their's is no earthly name.  
 "His own," how loved and tended,  
 How cared for, shepherded;  
 How called, and sealed, and folded,  
 How tenderly they're led.

"Green pastures" and "still waters,"  
 "His own" by Him supplied;  
 Their daily desert journey take,  
 With Jesus as their guide:  
 "His own," though often straying,  
 And wandering from the way,  
 Restored by His sweet presence,  
 Are kept from day to day.

"His own." They long to see Thee,  
 "Chief Shepherd" of the sheep;  
 For whom the "crown of glory,"  
 Thy ceaseless love doth keep.  
 'Tis not the crown they watch for,  
 "His own" the Lord will claim;  
 The sharers of His glory,  
 They'll praise His matchless name!

A. M. H.

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### F R A G M E N T S.

God puts the best robe on the Prodigal, and makes the whole house sing. He does not say, My prodigal is come back; but, "This my son!"

We want to learn distinctly and clearly that flesh never can be with God. *It* crucified Christ, it will not have God, and God wont have it.

## GOD'S LOVE TO A SINNER.

Romans v. 1-11.

THE truth in this chapter goes even farther than the eighth; and carries us into fuller blessing; because, as men say, it is more objective. That is, it is less about what is wrought in us, in order that we may enter into the enjoyment of redemption. This is what chapter viii. so beautifully describes. But God Himself, and what He is in Himself, is before us throughout these verses as the object of our souls!

For instance (in c. viii.), we have "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, *hath* made *me* free from the law of sin and death." That is, the Spirit of God is looking at the effect upon *our* hearts of the work of redemption. Here (c. v.), "We have peace *with God!*" so that the blessing is looked at in reference to God Himself. It is in virtue of what *God is*, that there has been this redemption wrought. The work is not presented here as making *me* free by the Spirit of Christ in my soul; but it is the total putting away of sin out of *God's* sight; and "being justified by faith," that I may joy *in Him!* And this after all is the secret of all our blessing. These verses (1-11) give us truly the privileged place of the Christian, but we shall find that throughout they speak of Him who has wrought the work instead of the effect of the work of redemption on our hearts.

I can quite understand that souls would turn more to the eighth chapter. I am not finding fault with their doing so; for in the seventh and eighth chapters we have the process which must go on in the soul, that it may know the privileged place of the Christian. But it is a higher thing to have God before us as the object of our souls! and until we are brought to this by grace, the heart does not get to God Himself. This is what will constitute our eternal blessedness in heaven. It will not be *our* joy that will occupy us there. We shall have no need to think of self, where every thing will be perfect. We shall have nothing left to desire, our object will be *God* Himself! There is not this objective truth in the eighth chapter. There we find what meets our need. All right and blessed in itself, but after all not the highest thing.

In the eighth chapter we have the "Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the "Spirit of adoption," and "God for us;" and as

has often been said, the chapter beginning with "no condemnation," and ending with "no separation." Most blessed truth, but still occupying the heart with what it has received, more than with what God is. How we like to be occupied with self. It is natural to us all. If, for instance, a person suffers bodily pain, he will talk to you about it, not that he likes the pain, but he talks to you about it, because it is about himself; and so with pleasure, because it is what he has been enjoying. We see this occupation with self in souls just delivered. It is their joy and their deliverance that occupies their minds, and I am not finding fault with it. If I were now taking up the process that must go on in your souls before you can have God as the object of your heart, I should turn to the seventh and eighth of Romans to bring this out. We must all pass through this process, and the deeper the better. There is no settled peace with God until the sinner has been thus exercised, and has learned not only what He has done, but, as the seventh chapter brings out, what He is.

In the verses of our chapter we have read, it is "sins" that are taken up, after the eleventh verse the apostle takes up "sin;" that is, not what a man has *done*, but what he *is* in himself. In the beginning of the epistle the apostle speaks of sins, first in the Gentiles, and then in the Jews; and in the third chapter we have "redemption" by blood from these sins. But the soul has to learn more than this. The soul must come to the end of flesh before God. Not in conflict, for that always remains; but before you can have settled peace with God, you must be delivered from this state of a man "in the flesh" responsible to God. When one has come to the end of it, as to all hope in it, and as to all expectation of getting any good out of it, the soul gets "deliverance" by Another. Then being "*in Christ*," I find there is "no condemnation." I am no longer "in the flesh" before God; I am "in Christ." It is getting rid of flesh, not by passing over sin and making light of it; but by dying to that condition in Christ, and rising out of it into another in Him.

Now this judgment of what sin is in the soul is called experience. I do not speak of conviction, or of having committed sins, as experience. That is repentance, and that is the first work when divine light enters the conscience; but Romans vii. is the experience, through the Spirit working

within, not of what a man has *done*, but of what he *is*. And he gets delivered by reckoning himself dead, because Christ has died, so that he can say, being in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation.

But in convincing a man of sins, God takes up his conscience as a matter of fact. He lets His light into the soul, and shows it what has been going on there; like the vision of God which the prophet saw when God commanded him to dig into the wall of the Temple and to go in, and there he saw all the abominations and idols of Israel pourtrayed upon the wall round about.

When God is convincing a soul of what it has done, He says, "I'll set before thee the thing which thou hast done. Now look at your life as it has been, but let *Me* be there, while you look back, and let *Me* cast My light upon everything that you have done." How vivid, then, does the memory become! What a number of things long forgotten rise up before the mind! Now that is all guilt, and this conviction of guilt is where God begins with the soul. Just as the Lord did with the woman of Samaria, telling her all things that ever she did, so that she could say to others she had found the Messiah, for He had told her all things that ever she did.

This is the first witness that He is the Christ, *because* He can enter the heart, and show us as, a wonderful Recollector, all that we have done. Now is there any honesty, dear friends, in trying to keep up a good character, and all the time to have a guilty conscience? I suppose you all have a good character before men, and you may even be outward worshippers of God, but if God should come in when you are carrying on your worship, you would fly and hide yourselves from Him as Adam did in the trees of the garden. Well! that shows that you have a bad conscience, and what honesty, I say, is there in having a very good character and a very bad conscience. Why, you would not have any one know what passes in your hearts. Suppose the world was to have everything told about everyone, how would the world get on? I don't say any good would come out of such a disclosure, but it just shows what the world is, what you are.

This is, what the presence of Christ brought out. The truth came by Him, grace too, but He was the truth and revealed everything. Now the law was not the truth about

anything. The law does not say what things *are*, but what they *ought to be*, and that is necessarily condemnation. But the law is only a rule. It is not the truth itself, but only commandments about what a man ought to be. But when Christ came, He was the truth Himself. He is, we know, the truth still, but I am speaking now of His manifestation on earth. It is not merely a commandment, but I know a Person, who is the thing itself. Take the Beatitudes; (Matt. v.) He says, for instance, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Well, but He was poor in spirit. "Blessed are the meek;" and He was meek and lowly in heart, and so with all of them. He *was* what He taught, so that in Christ I have the thing, as well as have heard about it. Everything is brought completely out: what God is, and what man is, and besides being the truth, grace came by Him. He reveals the sin as in the woman of Samaria, but talks to her of the gift of God, as if she were as pure as an angel! All the sin is brought out by this blessed One; but I see God above it all in goodness. Oh! what a comfort this is to the heart. I learn it in the Holy One, who walked up and down in this world. I know Him. He tells me what He is, and if He tells me what I am as a sinner, He is God and is greater and better than it all! I have not to ask where is He? as He said to the blind man in John ix., "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." I am He who has found out all that is in your heart, not as a Judge, but as a Saviour! The Person who convicts of sin is the Saviour.

This we see all through the word, in the souls of those the Lord dealt with. Bringing out before the conscience of the sinner what God is, and then saying, "I that speak unto thee am he." He who is the Judge of quick and dead is He that says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." There I am, a poor sinner in His presence, and He speaks to me of the gift of God. Is it that He does not know me? or that He is deceived as to my character? No, indeed. He has told me all things that ever I did, but in showing me what I am, He has shown me what God is in grace.

But blessed as it is to have God dealing about sin in this manner, this is not all; there must be a work to put sin

away before God, and to clear the conscience; and so in the last verse of the preceding chapter we have Christ delivered for our offences; and raised again for our justification. It is what God has wrought in Christ. He delivered Him for our offences, and has raised Him from the dead, so that, "having been justified by faith, we have peace with God."

Thus the conscience is cleared, and in God's sight, too, we are perfectly clear. We want both. It is not enough that there should be this perfect putting away of sins in God's sight, you must have the answer to it in your conscience, too, or you cannot walk with God. God won't have sin, and until a soul has peace with God about its sins, it cannot walk with Him. Of course, if you are careless about the thing altogether, you are not walking with God; but I am supposing you are troubled about sins. Well, you must get your conscience clear. I grant, you may walk, forgetting Him and go on with your sins, *that we are very apt to do*, but you cannot walk with God in your sins, that is impossible. Now what the Spirit of God shows us in this chapter is, that God has put us into a position above the sin, having delivered Christ for our offences.

We must be fit for heaven, not fit to get back to Paradise, that is over for ever and ever. We must be fit now to be in the presence of God where He is fully revealed. How can this be? Why, God has delivered His own Son for the offences, so that they are all atoned for. It is an accomplished fact, He gave Himself for this according to the counsel of God. Man had nothing to do with that. Of course, it was man's wickedness that crucified Him, but I do not speak of that now. It was according to the counsels of God entirely outside man's doings. It was an act between the blessed Lord and God about sin; and the whole thing is settled. I have nothing to do but to believe what God has done, and I have peace with God. Not that a soul who has peace with God will be free from conflict with sin, and from exercise of heart; but as regards its relationship with God, it can say—He has delivered His Son for my offences! It is the revelation of what God has done, and done too, long before I became anxious about the matter, so that I have peace with God. Christ has done the work which has put the sin away. I have peace before God about my sins, and I have peace in my conscience too. Now if you are christians and have not this answer in your conscience, you are not

where Christ's work has put you. You may be learning what you are in yourselves, all very needful in its place, but till you have peace with God, you have not got that which Christ has made by the blood of His cross. The thing is perfect in itself. There is the peace, whether you have it or no. Your conscience entering into it is another matter.

It is this which Peter means, when he says, "Who by Him do believe in God." When I enter into what God has done in delivering Christ for my offences, and raising Him when He had borne them, then I believe in God. I have peace with Him.

See how entirely it is outside yourselves. I have God before me as an object, by believing what He has done in delivering Christ for my sins. I have peace with Him about my sins.

But this is not all. The apostle goes on to say, "By whom, also, we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." It is not only that I am delivered from my place of guilt and condemnation, but what place have I now? Here we come to resurrection. I have access by a risen Christ into the place of grace and divine favour before God. I have a present place before God. The Judge has brought me there. He has raised Christ for my justification, so that it is not only that I am delivered from my old place in Adam, but I am brought into a new place in Christ. I am standing in the favour of God. For a poor, vile, corrupt thing like me, He has given His Son. The sins are gone, but the love remains, and in this grace and favour of God I stand.

But there is more than this. You may say, but what can you want more? Well, for my present position in this world I do not want more than to stand in this favour of God in a risen Christ, but then I am not always going to remain here. I have another prospect. I am going to God, and I rejoice in hope of being in His glory. This is my prospect for the future. I am going into the glory of God. Do you say, How can I expect that? Well, dear friends, if I look at myself a poor worm, I could not say so; but I don't look at myself, I look at Christ, and then I can say, I shall have it, for He who died for my sins, is in the glory of God, and He is my life, so I can say I shall be with Him there, as the apostle says, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Thus, God is before us as our object. It is not my happiness, but His glory, and what He is for me; and He is far more glorious in redemption than He was in creation. He had not to give His Son to *create* a world, but He had to *redeem* one. Christ has gone into that glory of God as a man, and as the firstborn among many brethren, whom God is bringing to glory, entering there as our forerunner. That is what my hope is.

Then, also, we glory in tribulations. These are the exercises by the way. And we glory in them, because "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts;" so that we can say, Come what may, how can He but love me, having given His own Son to die for me, when I was a sinner and an enemy.

Mark here, again, how objectively the apostle speaks of the love of God. It is not as in chapter viii., the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, crying, Abba, Father, in our hearts; but this love is shown in the way it acted toward us while we were sinners and without strength; and to be proved to be without strength is a harder matter by far than to be convinced that one is a sinner. Well, the love came out, then, in Christ dying for us. Much more, then, says the apostle, having been reconciled by His blood, we shall be saved by His life. If His love was such, when He was at His weakest, (for He was crucified, we read, through weakness;) how much more can we count upon that love in everything, now that He liveth by the power of God for us. Thus in all the exercises of heart I pass through, I say, I am sure, come what may, all is love. And how do I prove it? I answer, when there was no good in me at all, He gave His Son to die for me, and if when an enemy He died for me, now that He has made me His friend, He is not going to cast me off. I can expect everything, when I reason from what God is, and what He will be to me. To know this is the peace and strength of the Christian.

Thus I look back and see Him delivering His own beloved Son for my sins, and I say, That is what He has done for me. I look at the present place into which He has brought me, and I say that is what He is to me, and I rejoice in the hope of His glory, as that which I shall have. We have three things in these blessed verses—sins gone, present grace, and future glory; then I glory in tribulations, because they

give instruction in the path, and the key to all the exercises I pass through, is His love to me when ungodly and without strength, for then it was He gave His Son for me, and that was the very best thing there was in heaven to give.

The Spirit of God reasons throughout from God to us. Then there is a step further, for in learning God, I can joy in God Himself, the highest thing of all. He becomes the delight of my heart as an object. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation."

The place of the Christian is a settled place, in which he can joy in God. If he looks up, there is not a cloud. There were plenty, but Christ has put them all away! When we were poor wretched sinners, He loved us, and gave His Son for our offences, and now at peace with Him through His own work we can joy in Him, and judge from what He was to us as sinners as to what He will be to us as saints. The Christian is one who is beloved in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and who, having believed in what God has wrought, knows that sin is put away.

And now, dear friends, let me ask you, Have you peace with God? The Lord Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." There it is, but have you entered into it? The Lord Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Have you the rest which He gives? No, you say. Well, then, you are not yet in the place into which God puts His people. What has the work of Christ done for you? Has it redeemed you? Then you are redeemed. Has it reconciled you? Then you are reconciled—you have peace!

May you not be satisfied in anything short of this—being able to say, I am reconciled to God, so that you may be able to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

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## FOLLOWING CHRIST.

PEOPLE who are following Christ never make a fuss, or much show about it. It is quiet, steady, blessed work. Like the hour-hand of a clock, it does its work slowly but surely; while the minute-hand gets over twelve times as much ground in the day, it accomplishes only as much in the end of the day as the other.

## THE LIVING GOD.

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” (Heb. iii. 12.)

“IN the day thou eatest thou shalt die.” The life forfeited by sin has never been regained by man. There has been a constant witness to this. The setting of the cherubim at the gate of the garden of Eden, at the very beginning, to keep every way the way of the tree of life, was a witness to this. The ordinances under the law, nay so early as the day of Noah, that blood was not to be eaten, was a like witness. For blood “was as the life,” and eating implied communion; so that the ordinance which forbade the eating of blood expressed this, that man had lost all communion with life, all title to it, and enjoyment of it. And thus was it witnessed again and again, that the life which man had lost by sin he never of himself could regain. Trial was made by the law; for the man that did the law was to live by it. But all in vain. But the Lord Jesus, the Son of the living God, the living God Himself in flesh had it in Himself, and has regained it for us; and in its infallible, eternal condition, beyond the fear of a second forfeiture, or the reach of the power of death, has imparted it to us. He was the living God, and came into this scene of death to act in it as such. The victory of life over death He achieved, and the fruit of that victory He is sharing with His people.

In the days of *His ministry* He recognised Himself (Jesus Son of Man as He was) as the living God. (See John ii. 19; viii. 51; xi. 25). And He gave pledges that He was so, by healing diseases and forgiving sins. At His death He accomplished the triumph of the living God, inasmuch as He thereby set aside sin, the source and principle of death; the rent veil being a solemn writing as under the hand of God in the highest place of judgment that sin had been put away. He *rose from the dead* as in the accomplished victory of life; He acted as the living God breathing on His people, as of old He had breathed the former life into the nostrils of man.

Thus has the living God been here in this death-stricken world, doing his proper work. Jesus is He—as the Spirit in John, looking at Him, says, “This is the true God and eternal life.” Death reigned, but in due time the Son was “made of a woman,” that He might taste death; and as

soon as He did He triumphed over it, destroying him that had the power of it.

This is simple. But among the witnesses of this great mystery, we find one deeply to be listened to in the epistle to the Hebrews. There Jesus is *presented as the living one, and the living one for us*. Wherever in that epistle He is seen in contact with death, He is seen also on the other side of it in life and honour. He is there presented eminently as the *dead or crucified One*. He is the Lamb slain, the victim on the altar, the One who shed His blood. But as eminently is He alive from the dead, and seated in some place of honour and authority on the other side of death. And this proclaims His victory. The *rent veil* proclaimed it in *its* way; the *empty sepulchre* proclaimed it in *its* way; *faith* (as in the woman who anointed the Lord's body for his burial) proclaimed it in *its* way; but the Holy Ghost, who in this epistle discloses the crucified Jesus in honour and eternal life, proclaims it in *His* way. Thus,

In chap. i. 1-3, He is the purger of our sins, which character we know He gained by reason of death. But in the same passage we see Him now, beyond death, in the place of highest honour, on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens.

In chap. ii. 5-9 we find Him by the grace of God having tasted death. But we find Him in the same scripture crowned with glory and honour, and in expectation of universal dominion into which He will lead us as "sons of glory."

In chap. ii. 14, 15 we find Him again *under* the dominion of death for a moment, but immediately upon that we find Him death's destroyer, and the deliverer of those who were death's captives and bondmen.

In chap. v. 6-10 we read that His personal title to life was owned and sealed of Him who was able to save Him from death; but we read also of His surrender of Himself in the spirit of obedience to death for us, and that this death has seated Him in the honour of a Melchizedec priesthood constituted in the power of an endless life (and by the oath of Him who must swear by Himself) for us.

In chap. ix. 14, 15 we see him as the one who had offered Himself to God as the Lamb whose blood was needed. But we see Him also as the mediator of the better covenant providing by His death for the transgressions of His people, and securing to them an eternal inheritance.

In chap. ix. 28, we see Him somewhat after the same manner, once offered up bearing the sins of the people of God, but now appointed to appear in due time as with salvation and glory, and the power of a kingdom, and that, too, for all that look for Him.

Death He suffered as verily and more tremendously than it was ever suffered. But it was "through the Eternal Spirit" He offered Himself; and death, which leads us to judgment, (Heb. ix. 27) led Him, as we thus see, to life, and honour, and power; and this life, and honour, and power of Jesus, once dead but now risen from the dead, is our salvation. He is the living God, and that in victory, doing more glorious work than in Gen. i., and whatever this living one touches He perfects, imparting the value of eternity to it. Whether it be the Altar, the Priesthood, the Covenant, or the Kingdom, all is *for ever!* He obtained "eternal" redemption for us, and secures an "eternal" inheritance to us, inasmuch as He offered Himself through the "Eternal Spirit." (ix. 12-15.) His kingdom "cannot be moved." (xii. 28.) His covenant is ever "new." (viii. 13.) His altar or sacrifice perfects "for ever" them that are sanctified." (x. 14.) His priesthood is "unchangeable," and His consecration to it is "for evermore." (vii. 24-28.)

Thus life and eternity are indeed brought back to us. We are in a region of life through the Son of God dead and risen, as we had been in a region of death through sin and Satan. A way has truly been opened, whereby the living God has brought His banished ones home to Him.

Surely, therefore, the suited exhortation is, "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God."

It is excellent beyond all thought. It is the empty sepulchre we are looking into when we read this wondrous epistle. He was there, but He is there no more for ever. Come see the place where the Lord *did* lie; but He is not there, He is risen. The living God has proved that the gates of hell instead of prevailing, have given way and been broken to pieces. Samson has carried the gates of Gaza to the hill-top. Jesus has made a show of the power of death and darkness. It is the woman in the Gospel who anointed His body for the burial; by faith setting Him in honour and authority, and life, on the other side of death that we are looking at when we read this epistle. For the Holy Ghost in this

epistle seats Him in the same place, or reveals Him as seated there; divine counsels thus verifying and vindicating the finest apprehensions of faith. And surely we can therefore understand why it was that the Lord Himself set such a seal on that strange and marvellous act of faith, saying of it, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached, in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

In the course of this epistle to the Hebrews, warnings, rebukes, exhortations are again and again employed, for the end of keeping our ear, as I may speak, nailed to the door of the Master that is now speaking to us from heaven, this living God, Jesus. Very solemn these warnings are. But let me add for comfort, that it is not where the heart is feeble, and the faith small, that the Spirit is thus moved to sound an alarm in our ears. It is only where the ear is advisedly *withdrawn* from His voice, and lends itself to another voice, which makes it a liar. The writer of this epistle delights to own what is of life in the saints he addresses, and he addresses them still as saints beloved, though he sounds these alarms in their hearing. (See vi. 9, x. 39.) But he makes no terms whatever with an advised turning away of the ear to another voice—"the voice of a stranger," as the Lord Himself speaks in John x.

For, blessed be His name, weak faith, accompanied most likely with many a grief at heart in the longing for a bolder and more happy assurance, is under His eye, a very different thing from advised revival of ordinances as the stay and hope of the soul.

"The living God," from whom we are not to depart, according to this epistle (iii. 12), is now to be worshipped by us (ix. 14), and in due time will judge all that have refused Him (x. 31), and finally have His own city in the region of the eternal glory. (xii. 22.) It is an evil thing to depart from Him, a fine thing to worship Him; a fearful thing to fall into the hands of His judgment, a glorious thing to reach the heights of His city on the top of the hill.

Thus, being brought back to "the living God" we never lose Him or leave Him. We can worship Him, and for ever shall we know His city of glory. And now to depart from Him is, by and by to meet Him in judgment.

## A SAVIOUR TO DIE OR A NATION TO PERISH

John xi. 49-52.

THERE are two thoughts of immense moral power in these words, "one man should *die*" . . . "that the whole nation perish not,"—they bring before the heart the great truth of man's ruin and God's salvation in a striking way.

Caiaphas, the high priest, (in this the unconscious mouth piece of the Holy Ghost,) gives expression to it in the above words: viz., "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people;" and as you read those words and ponder them, the words of the Lord Jesus Christ come to your mind, "*ought* not Christ to suffer"—"it *behoved* Christ to suffer."

Let us now examine a little together, wherein consists this "*ought* not?" this divine moral necessity, if I may thus reverently speak.

It was because of what God in His own being is, and ever was, a righteous, holy, sin-hating God; and at the same time gracious, merciful, long-suffering God, who would spare sinners; a God of love?

In the second place it was because of what man *was*, and *is*, a self-willed, rebellious, sin-loving creature. God had made the world, and all was very good; last of all He made man in His own image; placed him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it, surrounded him with the tokens of God's care, and restricted him from eating the fruit of one tree, viz., the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here in this garden where every thing was a perpetual reminder of the interest and care of his Creator, man willingly believes the lie of Satan, harbours in his breast a slander against God, and acting under its influence, sets up his own will; and in the exercise of it appropriates to himself what God under penalty had restricted. What a picture! the creature of the handiwork of God, in opposition to the will of his Creator, has acted for himself, and has forfeited the place of blessing in which God had placed him, and the life in which he was to enjoy the blessing given him there. He has subjected himself to the penalty which God has announced, and is driven out from the presence of God—a fallen man.

We now have man, the head of God's creation, outside of Eden, in the wide waste of this world, having a nature at variance with God, and with only a forfeited life between him and the judgment, which ends in being cast into the lake of fire! What a scene! What a desolation!

What now is to be done? On whose side would you say the first movement towards reconciliation should take place? Of course on man's; because it was he who brought about this distance from God. It was man, therefore, that was bound in every way to repair the breach; which, the following his own will, had introduced between him and his Creator. Instead of this, from God Himself in His wondrous rich grace, super-abounding grace; from God, the offended One, the first movement comes! He discloses that He desires not that the breach should continue; and as man would not, and still further cannot repair it, the blessed God undertakes to do so, and hence it becomes necessary that the Divine requirements should be met, and the penalty which man had incurred should be borne. Hence the blessed God gave His Son, who was perfect and spotless, to be chargeable with His people's guilt: and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, bore the judgment, endured the sinner's penalty in grace, gave up His own life; that the love of God, who gave Him to die, might travel out world wide to all!

Now we can understand the "Ought not Christ to suffer, and enter into His glory." The expediency that one man should die? What a penalty, and with what a price was it not paid! God's dear Son laying down His life for us: and more, that He might read to us the heart of the living God!

How can we then allow the will and nature for which He had to die! No! It is the very sequence of love; the answer of heart to His is, that we must hate that nature and will, out of which, and from which, His death alone could save!—T.

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## WHAT IS PRACTICAL SANCTIFICATION?

In the first place, let me remark on the word practical, whether applied to sanctification, or anything else; that it constitutes what a Christian is by the grace of God, and the efficacious work of Christ. Practical, is so generally limited to what the believer desires *to be*, in his walk upon the earth for the glory of the Lord as seldom to include the state of the soul in its fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ—upon which, after all, any real development depends.

The character of my intercourse and communion with

God must surely be an immensely practical consideration, in my relation as a son with the Father: quite as much as the character of my obedience and service day by day for Him. Indeed, it is the relationship itself, in which by grace we stand before God in Christ, that supplies the motives of filial love to the heart, for free action as a new creature in Christ. If otherwise, I sacrifice the liberty of the Spirit of adoption and my sonship, and accept the old spirit of servanthship, again to fear.

The spring of all Christian obedience is from life, in a subsisting relationship with the Father in love—and this is practical, embracing in its range all I can think, or say, or do.

As regards the question, What is practical sanctification? it is well to see in the scriptures the place which God takes in it. For instance, Jude addresses his epistle, "To them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called"—a very full and precious passage for the soul, which, by the Holy Ghost, gets into its enclosures; and most practical. Again, our sanctification is connected with the will of God in Heb. x. 10. "Then said he, Lo I come to do thy will O God . . . by the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once." Farther, in verse 14, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." So that our *personal fitness* is undeniable, to worship with boldness in the holiest where God dwells—and this, "by the new and living way" through the veil.

When worship is a *real* thing, and a matter of *fact* between the soul and God; and where the High Priest, over the house of God *is*; our worship becomes a part, and a very important one, of our practical sanctification. In truth, what can be more so? That is to say, when it is maintained in this liberty of "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and carried on in perfect peace with God, and in the holiest.

Alas, in these days of Ritualistic observances, or of prevalent Judaic-teaching; when the worshipper is put under the law of Moses, and in the distance in which an old testament saint stood, what wonder is it, that worship, (christian worship I mean) should form no part of what is proposed by the question—What is practical sanctification? Most deliberately and firmly do I reply, that our worship in the holiest (like our communion with the Father) forms

another, and a most necessary part of sanctification: for our worship takes its character from what God either is or is not towards us; and gives a corresponding response of heart on our part towards Him, as being either in the distance in which the outer-court Israelite worshipped God; or else in the nearness in which the blood of Christ has set us inside the veil, and at home with the Father in the holiest.

Surely no Christian will deny *this* to be sanctification, when he recalls the scriptures which tell us in what it consists. Nor will he doubt it to be practical, if he knows the value of a purged conscience, and a heart from which all fear is dismissed for ever. Indeed, whatever we do for God must take its character from our worship. This either in the liberty of a son, or in the spirit of a servant.

Having thus referred to God and to Christ, in this view of our practical sanctification; it yet remains to say a word as to the Holy Ghost. It is of great moment to distinguish and to keep distinct the work of Christ *for us*, which is perfect; and the work of the Spirit *in us*, the effect of which because of what *we* are, in whom He dwells and operates, is always imperfect in what is *produced* in us—though never as to whom He is come to reveal, for this is Christ—"He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." This work of the Spirit is likewise practical and necessary for our more complete separation in holiness; according to 1 Thess. v. 23, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Moreover, as to the Holy Ghost, Jesus said, "He shall glorify me, and He will show you things to come." Again, the Lord prayed, "sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth," and these are as necessary in their place for true and intelligent service, as what we have already said, is for real Christian worship or communion.

If we have any other practical questions, they are evidently these—am I in conscious, living association with the indwelling Spirit, and with the word of truth, so that my position and pursuits on the earth correspond with my worship and standing before God in the heavens? This last work of conformity to Christ is doubtless progressive in us still, "For to me to live is Christ" is the rule. It is a great thing to know that we are as consciously in agreement

with what Christ was when on earth, or now, in what He is in the heavens, as the sun-dial answers to the sun. "As Christ is, so are we in this world," is our only true conformity. The measure of this in us will vary, but our practical sanctification is in nothing to contradict what Christ is!

Sometimes, however, people are not really out of the backwoods when they talk of sanctification; and still think that the old Adam nature is to be made better, and that its proclivity to sin and enmity against God are to die out, and give place to love and delight in Him. Now all this is Judaism and not Christianity; and further shows the extent to which the Lord's people have slipped back into the house of Moses, instead of taking their places by grace and redemption in the house of the Son.

When the dispensational difference between the law which was given by Moses, and the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ are not seen—people put themselves in connection with both, and so get neither. How can Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary be harmonised? Moses said, "Thou shalt do"—but Christ said, "I have finished."

So again, as to Adam and Christ we are really *now* in one or the other; and not in both—"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

Our practical sanctification as Christians upon these subjects is not in a vain expectation of making the old man better; but by *keeping that under death*, which God has put to death at the cross of Christ. "Our old man *has* been crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." The proved worthlessness of the flesh was such under the law, that God declares there is no good thing in it; and therefore "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin *condemned* sin in the flesh." This is how we are to regard it at the cross, and this is how the Spirit in us, will help us to treat it. "Ye are dead" is one point, and a very cardinal one of our practical sanctification.

Adam, Sinai, and Moses, are not the way to deliverance, but to wretchedness: and many there be that travel that road—but Christ, and Calvary, and the Man at the right hand of God give us the victory over sin, the flesh, and Satan. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Conflict there will be, for the flesh is contrary

to the Spirit, but it remains true, "if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Only take care to be practically in connection with life in Christ risen, and with power (divine power) through the Holy Ghost. This will be in deep self-judgment, whenever the flesh is active in us; but never in bondage, much less in misery as being under it—for "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." And "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

It is an important inquiry, whether I am more dwelling upon my deficiencies and short-comings, or on Christ's perfectness—more on my own emptiness, or on His fulness—in fact, does *self* occupy me, or Christ? If the former, I must cry out "My leanness, my leanness;" but if it be Christ, I shall be conscious of a "love that passeth knowledge," whereby we are "filled into all the fulness of God." Put a plant under the rays of the sun, and it will feel what the sun is and respond to it in the beauty, fragrance, and colour which it produces, but keep it in the shade, and it will droop and turn out sickly and poor.

The indwelling Spirit glorifies Christ as we have said, and *occupies the new man with Christ*; and forms Him in the heart, the hope of glory, and this is the only adequate power of keeping the world, the flesh, and Satan outside. Not that a Christian will say, "we have no sin," but on the contrary remember, "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Still, I acknowledge sin to be inconsistent with myself, as a new creature in Christ and can the more heartily thank God that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—B.

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## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"C. SOMERSET."—"What is the dispensational meaning of the 'days' in John i.; and how do they correspond with the 'days' in John xx. and xxi.?"

First, John's testimony to his disciples, who attach themselves to Jesus during His lifetime here. (Verse 35, &c.) Then the Lord's, then that of the witnesses. (Verse 43, &c.) Then, again, Nathanael figures the remnant in the last

days; an Israelite in whom is no guile; (compare Zeph. iii. 13; Rev. xiv. 5.) who still sits under the old covenant—"apart," (compare Zech. xii. 13.) and upon whom the Lord's eyes are in their time of distress, before they see Him. (See Isaiah lvii. 15.; lxvi. 2.) Then they own Him as "Son of God," and "King of Israel," according to Psa. ii. Still, Nathanael, now that he knew the Lord, would see greater things than these; heaven opened, and a "Son of Man" the object of the attention of the angels of God! For "hereafter" read "henceforth."

Then (chap. ii.), the third day, the Lord, in the marriage scene in Galilee, renews His relations with Israel. Becomes the host instead of guest, and turns the water of purification into the wine of joy of the kingdom. Thus He manifests His glory. Then follows His judicial action at Jerusalem, and cleansing the temple.

These days are wholly *earthly*, and with Israel. First, John's testimony; then Christ's and then the witnesses'; and then His connection with the Jews and the temple on His return.

In chaps. xx., xxi., there are no "days," and here it is rather the contrary. He gathers His disciples after His *resurrection*, and is in their midst in the first scene. Thomas represents the Jewish remnant who believe when they see Him. (Zech. xii., xiii.) He pronounces the blessedness of those who have not seen, but have believed. It is not the church (as taught by Paul), but an intimation of resurrection work; not a simply earthly one. There are no "days" here, but three consecutive scenes pointing to a Christ known as having left them in resurrection—not uniting by the Holy Ghost believers into one body; which belongs to ascension, and John does not teach the church, or mention it as such.

An intimation, I apprehend, in Thomas' unbelief, that the Jew does not believe the testimony of Christianity and Christ risen through the Church. He believes when He *sees*, as the Jews will do, according to Zech. xii., xiii., &c., and owns Him as his Lord and his God. (See Isaiah xxv. 9.)

In the third scene, you get *seven* fishers and unbroken nets—the work of millennial ingathering is not marred. When the morning comes the Lord appears, and the nets are drawn to shore—the Lord has fish already on the land, taken thro' their night of toil.

“MY SPIRIT IS FAINT AND WEARY.”

MY spirit is faint and weary,  
 I sigh for the land I love;  
 I pant for that blessed country,  
 Where all is peace and love.  
 I long for the glorious brightness,  
 Those heavenly courts to see;  
 To gaze on the King in His beauty,  
 On my Lord who died for me!

But here in the wilderness weary,  
 Will I go where He points the way;  
 And the darker the desert journey,  
 The brighter will seem that day.  
 When I gaze on my Lord, my Saviour,  
 And His own loved face I'll see;  
 And praise, and worship Him ever,  
 For His boundless grace to me!

And then through the countless ages,  
 Of those never-ending years;  
 In that land of joy and glory,  
 Neither sin, nor clouds, nor tears:  
 Yea there will I sing the praises  
 Of Jesus who so loved me;  
 Who bled, who died, who rose again,  
 That I ever might with Him be.

Come Lord, I'm faint and weary,  
 With the burden and heat of the day;  
 With the conflict with sin and Satan,  
 And the darkness of the way.  
 Come Lord, I am watching, waiting,  
 Tarry not, O Lord, but come,  
 And take thine own longing pilgrim  
 On high to thy Father's home.

M. E. B.

FRAGMENTS.

SATAN has power against pretension; against knowledge; but no power against obedience; if we are acting by the word, with no will of our own. With Jesus Satan was baffled, the strong man was bound, and the way in which He bound him was by simple obedience.

I HAD been shut out of the earthly paradise, because sin was complete; and now I have got into the paradise of God, because righteousness is complete.

“HEREIN IS LOVE.”

1 JOHN iv. 7-17.

It constantly occurs to one in reading such passages as the fifteenth verse of this chapter, that although such things are plainly set forth in scripture, yet the truth of it is but little entered into by Christians. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, *God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*” Many would resent the thought of not confessing the first clause, who would be afraid and unable to own the positive result as theirs, which flows from such a confession. They don’t even know what it means—“*God dwelleth in him, and he in God.*” The real truth and power of the presence of the Spirit of God in us, because we are redeemed and cleansed, is not believed. How little a person believes his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Of course I do not now speak of the mere hypocrite ; but of one who does really confess that Jesus is the Son of God, the One in whom we trust.

There are those who are arrested by such a thought, and are really unhappy and miserable because they can’t say it is theirs. They are unable to do so because they see their own unworthiness, and they estimate the thing from what they find in themselves ; reasoning from what they are to God, instead of what God is to them. This state is dispelled by the soul being taken off its own estimate of itself, to God’s estimate of Christ. Then Christ takes the place of the estimate of self, and there is deliverance, and the heart is free. God brings the soul who thus groans for deliverance to a crisis, where there is nothing left but being cast completely upon His free and sovereign grace, and then deliverance is known. A death-bed is often an example of this. God’s word not only produces the groan of a soul for this deliverance ; but meets the groan with deliverance also.

See the way that God brings Israel to the Red Sea—to a point where they could not get out, then He says, “Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.” Israel might have been dreaming of escaping from Egypt or not in days before ; here they must learn that none but *God* can deliver ; and He does so. He not only produces the groan for deliverance, but brings the deliverance and the joy of it, by giving us the Spirit of adoption in our hearts.

God would have us happy with Himself, and would have us conscious of our salvation. If you can rest tranquil not

knowing it, you are in a bad state. Do you think a child would be right to say, "I don't know whether my father loves me or not, and I am content not to know?" But the delivered heart can say, (v. 16,) and God would have it say, "We *have known* and believed the love that God hath to us." But it is *impossible* to know it if I am looking at my own state toward God: for it depends upon the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. When we do not know that, we are not Christians in a true sense; and if so, how are we to love "Christ?" Am I to expect people to live as becomes children of God, till they know they are children of God? Can one be expected to fulfil the duties of wife or child, servant or master, until such a relationship is there? The relationship must exist first. Thus Christian responsibility and duty flow from a relationship known and enjoyed.

"Beloved let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." (v. 7, 8.) But you say, "How can this be? My heart is very cold: I hope I love: I hope I have not deceived myself; but I don't feel I love like this." You must be a partaker of the divine nature first. You will never understand the feelings of a nature till you possess it. How could you understand angelic nature unless you were an angel?

Verse 9 is the answer to this. Here I get something *outside* myself altogether. Here I learn God's love. It is manifested to me. "In this was manifested the love of God *toward* us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Now I understand what God's love is. I don't look into my own heart to see do I love Him. I find it manifested towards me, a poor lost sinner, outside myself altogether.

Suppose a person is loving me deeply and truly, do I look into my own heart to know that it is so? I may look there to see if I love him; but not to see if he loves me; the more so when he has given me full proof of it, I learn it by his acts. People reason in such a way in divine things; that if they so reasoned in human things, it would be treated as positive folly.

The Apostle's reasoning in verses 9 to 17 has wondrous beauty. He begins with me, a poor ruined sinner, dead by nature, guilty, and needing cleansing, and shows me that God has thought about me all along the whole way till the

day of judgment; and that on God's side there was nothing but love! I find the whole condition of a man taken up from being a sinner, till the day of judgment. I am dead in sins—He sends His Son that I might live. (verse 9.) Guilty, and He provides a propitiation and cleanses me. (ver. 10.) As a saint He perfects His love in me, by giving me His Spirit to dwell in me for my journey; (verses 12, 13.) so that I have communion and joy by the way; and when I look on to the judgment I have boldness, not “hope,” but “boldness!” Well, I say, and how have I treated Him? Cast Him out of the world when He came in the activity of His love to me! His love is active—and He sends His Son to die. He manifests it thus to me, and this is the return I have made Him! It is “not that we loved God, but that He loved us.”

Now (ver. 11) the exhortation to love, on our part, is in its right place, “we *ought* (surely) also to love one another.” “If God *so* loved us,” dead and needing life; guilty, and needing cleansing; when we did *not* love God, He did love us, and sent His Son that we might live through Him, and have a propitiation for our sins. Wondrous love!

Compare John i. 18 with ver. 12. In the former, Christ declares the Father as He knew Him “an only begotten Son” who is in His “bosom.” *This* love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. What do we see in Him here below? A holiness that could not be sullied, carrying God's love into a world where there was nothing but unholiness. It was holiness that nothing could enfeeble, displaying a love that nothing could fathom.

In verses 12 and 13 we have communion, now we have tasted His love, and we can “testify” (in ver. 14), “That the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;” and then He says, that “whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” God says this, He does not ask you to think or reason about it. As He does not let you off in passing an opinion as to yourself, and your own love to Him in ver. 10; neither does He let you off here as to your opinion about Him.

How do you treat the fact of God dwelling in you? He does this by His Spirit. There is nothing tells on the conscience like this fact. How do you treat such a guest? The grace of God in a man's heart is a tender plant in an unkindly soil which even a light thought will injure—a light

thought grieves the Spirit of God who dwells in us. Hence He exhorts us—"grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.)

When Paul speaks of all things being ours, he speaks of death too, being all gain, but he never says judgment is ours. When he thinks of judgment he thinks of *terror*. But the effect of having judgment before his eye makes him think of others. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;" and it is well to test ourselves in view of the judgment seat—when that day comes, *hope* is all over! There is no good in a judgment seat at all if sinners are not condemned there. People when they think of grace reason thus: "I am a poor sinner, and the cross just suits me." Well so it does, (though you should not remain there you should go on through the rent veil into God's presence.) But can you say, "I am a poor sinner, and the day of judgment just suits me?" Ah you say, no it does not. Therefore it is well that you should look at it in the face. When you do, how do you feel? Are you trembling and uncertain whether He is for you or against you, because of the sins which you have committed which He would then have to judge? But how has He ordered it? Why, before it comes, He has interfered in another way; He has given His Son to put away the sins He then would have to judge. Thus He has thought of everything all the way through! Very right to have lowly thoughts when I come to the cross with my sins. Lowliness becomes me when I think of God's blessed Son dying there. But when I think of judgment I have boldness—no lowliness there, because "as He is, so are we, in this world." Not as He *was*, but as He *is*. Am I to wait till the day of judgment to know whether He is righteousness enough for me? God hath made Him to be righteousness for me *now*! All that I was He has died for; all that I am is seen in Christ before God. Love looked upon us when far away from God in the land of our degradation, and God has provided for us all the way through!

Oh, but you say, does not this make light of responsibility? No, reply I, it establishes it. I can't be a naughty child until I am a child—very bad when one is so; and hence I judge all in my ways that is unfitted to me as a child of God—in the enjoyment of a relationship which never can be broken, and I have to behave myself as one in whom God dwells.

## EGYPT TO CANAAN.

## CONFLICT.

THE wilderness and its experiences we have seen is where you get God breaking down our wills, and testing and trying our hearts; we may be faithful there, but still be uncircumcised. You never get circumcision till you first get a heavenly place. Circumcision is the putting down the flesh practically into the place of death with Christ; and that, because *we are dead!* Israel were not circumcised until they reached Canaan.

After forty years they came up to Jordan. There we learn that we have not only Christ dying and rising for us, by which I am redeemed *out* of Egypt, but my dying and rising *with* Christ, and thus entering *into* heavenly places in Him. The passing through Jordan is not simply that He died for me, but it is I am dead, crucified with Him. The Christ that is in me as my life has died and risen again, so that I am looked at as not alive in this world at all. As in Ephesians, God has "quicken'd us together with him." We were down there dead in our sins, Christ comes down there, dies to put away our sins, comes into the place where I was; I am quickened and raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ: united to Him who is there. We are thus members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones—and thus in spirit *in* the heavenly places. Now the experiences which follow are not my own exercises and trials in this world, but having got into heavenly places in Christ, self is not owned at all; but the moment you are in there, all belongs to you; "all things are yours, whether life or death," &c. My *place* now is passing through this world as a wilderness; but if I talk of my *privileges*, I am in heavenly places in Christ. Well, if I am in the wilderness, I have a gracious neighbour, and I am gracious with him, but the moment I think of myself as a spiritual, heavenly man, it is another thing; for I find my neighbour an enemy to Christ. That will not do. Not that I am to be unkind; but I am in another sphere. If I am in Christ in heavenly places, a heavenly Christ is in me, and the standard I get of walk is to show out what is in heaven and nothing else. Let it be "always bearing about in the body, the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." So Paul held himself as a dead man. In that spiritual sense "death" says he, "worketh in us, but life in you,"—that is, in and by

Paul. That is Christian life. Failures are wilderness work; but if *in* her head, the Church has everything to manifest Christ. In spirit we are in heaven; and on earth, Christ is in us for life and power. Now let that be seen. If that is true, what I have got to do is never to let anything be seen in me but Christ. This brings us into conflict with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places; every place was their's, as He said unto Joshua, but the word was "put your foot on it." It is not uncertainty, nor wilderness experience; but now I am looking to realize my title to everything, and Satan is against me. "The Canaanite is still in the land." Suppose I want to put my foot down upon blessing, Satan at once opposes, and if I go to put my foot upon the thing, I find some one else's foot is there too; and therefore it is that the man with his drawn sword appears, who says to Joshua, as "Captain of the host of the Lord, am I now come." I find spiritual activity in the place that belongs to me. This world's things are "another man's," the heavenly things are "your own." "If you have not been faithful in that which is *another man's*, who shall give you that which is your own." Now how far in a spiritual way have you realized this inheritance? God has made you an heir, and you have scarcely realized it at all.

Now observe, when they had crossed over, twelve men took up twelve stones out of Jordan, the memorial of death—the ark had gone in as a type of Christ in death—(*I* have died to sin, the flesh, and the world) and set them up in Gilgal. We belonged to death once, but now death belongs to us. You have died and risen, passed through Jordan—now I practically mortify my members—here Joshua circumcised all who had not been circumcised, "mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." It is the application of the truth of our being dead with Christ to all our practice; and my title to do so is that *I am* dead.

You never find Scripture say, you must die to sin. You have liberty and power in Christ as being dead to sin, and now you have to apply that truth, and to "mortify therefore your member man." For instance, if I see a man looking at vanity, or going on with the world, and all the nonsense of the town, "Well," I say, "you may be dead, but you are not circumcised; you want a little of Gilgal,"—"the putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;" the practical putting the flesh on the ground of "ye are dead."

And so it must be, too, as we progress. Conquest after conquest they made, but after each they all—Joshua and all Israel—went back to Gilgal. No matter what success you may have in preaching the gospel, or in any other way in gaining Canaan ground, you must get back to Gilgal to judge the flesh.

When you come to the Book of Judges\* Israel was not faithful in putting down their enemies, they left a Hittite here, and a Hivite there; and we find the Angel of the Lord—that is, the presence of the Lord, goes from Gilgal to Bochim; He leaves the place of power and goes to Bochim—the place of tears. They build an altar there and worship, but they do it in tears. This has been the case with the Church in departing from her heavenly calling.

The place of self-judgment is practically the place of divine power—we must go back to Gilgal, for that is where we get God; the angel, or presence of the Lord, was there. Otherwise you will find victory itself dangerous.

Jericho is taken, for with God the cities may be walled up to heaven, yet what matter, the higher they are, the more they will be humbled. Jericho falls down. Then as for Ai, “it is a little city;” you need not all go up there; three thousand men will be enough. Victory leads to negligence, and confidence in human strength; they did not even consult the Lord, and *therefore* it was they could not prosper.

Now they eat the Passover; they can look back at the foundation of all; not now as looking to be protected by it from judgment; now they could look back to the very beginning; so we at the Lord's table, eating His flesh and drinking His blood; (wonderful to think that it was nothing less than the death of the Son of God!) I am celebrating, as a circumcised person, that which was the ground of all blessing; and I do this as in the glory with Christ by faith. The more we look at it, the more we shall find the Cross taking a place above everything, saving of course Him who was crucified. The Cross is a deeper thing than the glory—it is God's moral nature glorified in the place of sin. Here I am dwelling on it, thinking of it, circumcised *in* Canaan, and looking back at the Cross, not feeding on the manna, but on the produce of the land, “the old corn of the land.” The manna is Christ humbled here. He meets us in the journey

\* Joshua is the history of successful energy of the Spirit; Judges the history of failure, and God coming in to revive them time after time.

suitéd to our circumstances, and we feed on Him—the constant food of my soul. But as the old corn He has a heavenly character; a glorified Christ. I look upon Him, and feed on Him there, and am changed into the same image from glory to glory. We feed both on a humbled Christ, and a glorified Christ; but it is in beholding a glorified Christ we are conformed to an humbled Christ. Now, notice another feature here, as yet they had not taken a single city. All is ours before we gain one victory. God has given me Christ as my delight; I sit down here in the presence of my enemies; all is given me before I have drawn a sword to take possession, and I sit down and feed on everything as my own!

Then follows another thing. A man comes with a drawn sword in his hand; he comes for conflict; and Joshua asks the question, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” In social things we are to be kind and gracious, but here it is a question, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” Now this is not in the wilderness, but in the land. The world has crucified Christ, and Satan is prince of this world; I am associated with Christ, and either I go on with Him, or I go back with the world. “He that is not with me is against me,” and again, “He that is not against me is for me.” What does this mean? People say, I cannot understand it. It is simple enough—there is no mixing up the two things—they are completely opposite. If you are *for* the world, you are *against* Christ; and if you are *not* for the world, you are *for* Christ. There is a complete split between the world and Christ. The moment it comes to be a question of Christ, it is either for or against. I may put out the candle, or make it so dim that the light cannot be seen, but if you bring in the light then there is no middle place. Christians are trying to suit Christianity to the world in order to win it; then God has made a mistake: for Christ tried to win it, and it cast Him out and crucified Him. You may dim Christianity, but you will never get the world to go on with Christ.

“As Captain,” he says, “of the host of the Lord am I now come.” It was the Lord! “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot,” it was holy ground. In the spiritual conflicts that we have to carry on, holiness is as completely in question as in the wilderness. In conflict the condition of our strength is holiness—as with Moses at the bush, “put off thy shoes,” it is holy ground, so here, we cannot get on in the warfare

unless we are in practical holiness. As in redemption, so in conflict, He is "Jehovah Nissi:" the Lord our banner. But the one who is there is holy, He would not go out with Achan. We must go back to Gilgal, and our captain is holy. "He that is holy, he that is true." He looks for practical holiness in us who are redeemed; to whom the Lord is our strength. How far are we going on as dead, or allowing quantities of flesh, and of the world, to hang about us? Is it Gilgal or Bochim with us? Are we walking, as those who are dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world; and engaged in taking possession of our own things,—putting the sole of our feet on our heavenly portion—as heavenly men?

The Lord grant us that it may be ever so with us—for His name's sake. Amen.

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## THOUGHTS ON THE SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM, &c.

*(Concluded from page 21.)*

THERE is now going on through the mercy of God an inchoative fulfilment of that which will characterize the close of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens, and which comes naturally in this parable, the last of the series. Still there is a casting of the net, though not in the same sense precisely as given in the parable. For then it was cast into the sea of Idolatry and Judaism. Now in Christendom the gospel is preached among those who already bear outwardly the name of Christ. That is, if the preaching of the gospel in Christian countries so called, be the casting of the net into the sea (in the sense of the parable), we should have a second net cast in among the fish already caught. There would be professors outside as well as mere professors inside; but the sorting is made only from those inside the net. That is, profession would not be confined to those inside the net which was drawn ashore; but there would be others who were never drawn to shore at all. Not so. The casting the net into the sea is the first announcement of the kingdom, and the drawing of the filled net to the shore is the outward establishment of the doctrine taught, and the nominal obedience to the Lord Jesus. This is the kingdom-point of view; and here we can hardly call Christendom, where we have a nominal belief in the truth of Christianity, "the sea." Neither is the net symbolical of the Church, unless the professing world-

church, and then I see, in respect to the truth taught in this parable, no difference between it and the kingdom.

If the Church of God be here at all, I should look for it or for what represents it, under the figure of the good fish put into the vessels. Certainly those who are of the Church of God are there, but they are not viewed as on church ground. Nor are they confined to the Church. Those slain for the testimony of Jesus after the Church has gone, will have their place among those in the vessels. It is the judgment that puts an end to the present condition of the kingdom, and the mysteries go on till that time, and the Lord's appearing. Then the just are left living on the earth, and the wicked are cast into the fire. All who have died, martyred for the sake of Jesus before this, will be found among the good. The parable being a Similitude of the Kingdom in its present state, applies, until the present condition is terminated, by the appearance of the King to take His great power and glory, and to reign.

We have seen that what Christendom now presents, is the establishment of certain doctrines, and the outward bearing of the name of Christ. Also that the sorting takes place after the kingdom has been a certain time in existence. We may now ask, when that action began, which is set forth here by "putting the good into vessels." The writer of this paper does not pretend to answer save in a general way. That there is a time when such sorting is made is clear. And the seven Epistles to the churches in the Revelation contain, if not the same thing, yet that which is analogous, and I doubt not synchronizes with the sorting of the parable. It may be that there was always a remnant morally separated from the rest of the professing body. But the separation in the parables is not merely moral, it is distinct and visible. And this clear separation of a faithful remnant is first marked in the epistle to Thyatira, (Rev. ii. 24, which read thus, "But to you I say, the rest in Thyatira," &c.) Previous to this there had been the Ephesus, the Smyrna, and the Pergamos state. In these three the call to hear was addressed to the whole assembly. But in the fourth epistle there is a change, and the call to hear is to a plainly distinguished remnant.

The professing church was in the Thyatira phase when this separation commenced. And as the kingdom assumed a church-form, we may say that the "sorting" of the parable

began at the same time; though to be more distinctly made as the end draws near. The Reformation has undoubtedly something similar to that which will be by and bye. And this great event in the history of Christendom is generally placed when Thyatira became the type of the professing church.

A more practical question is, "Where is the sorting, who are the fishermen now engaged in putting the good into vessels?" Men have invented many kind of vessels into which they put as many fish as they can get. Nor are they able, or careful to separate the good from the bad. Other motives influence them. And the vessels they have are not such as God has provided. They have National Vessels, Dissent Vessels, Protestant and Roman Vessels, beside smaller ones, such as Baptist, Independent, Methodist, and many others. Are these what the Lord provides for His saints? No. These all divide the saints from one another, and join them to the mere professor. The vessel provided by the Lord is—separation from all evil, avoiding the unequal yoke, owning no name but His, submitting to no ordinance of man in sacred things. And beside those which give character to the outward man, there is the spring and source of it all, the daily communion and intercourse with God, without which all else, however correct, is a snare, and affords room for the display of the worse and baser principles of the flesh. The Lord's fishermen are separating His saints from the evil and bringing them around His Name, and not to human names. And this holy work is now going on. Every one who brings souls to Christ, who endeavours to build them up in Him and to know no centre but Him around which to gather, is separating souls from the surrounding ecclesiastical evil, and in effect is putting them into vessels. This is a course so very different from all others, that those who follow it, who are really apart from the sect-making of the day need nothing else to mark them out. And this is seen in many parts of Christendom. It is not confined to one country. There is one trait peculiar to the true fisherman—his sole concern is with the good. There are many so-called fishermen who concern themselves with sorting the bad. I do not mean the carrying of the gospel to them, this is imperative upon all. But it is the separating of the respectable and the reformed from the profligate by means of associations, institutions, and pledges. Such fishermen are engaged in a

work, and are striving to attain an object, in which they are co-workers with the world. And the end they have in view only regards social position, the great thing which now occupies the worldly philanthropist, whose professed aim is to ameliorate the mass. The true fisherman has an eye only for the good, he takes care of that. The bad are left alone, they are no concern of his, others, not he, will deal with them.

As the end approaches no doubt the process of separating the good from the bad will become more manifest, and the separation itself more distinct and defined. How it will be finally accomplished is not for us to say. One means may be a far greater subjection of heart to the word of God. And persecution from without may be used of God to bring the faithful together; but this would only be an indirect means. It is expressly said to be the work of the fishermen to put the good into vessels, and therefore the direct and immediate means will be the energy and power of the Spirit of God in each servant, working on the saints and bringing them all together into one spiritual condition before the Lord, waiting for His coming. Still as the superstitious and infidel world are drawing closer together in their hatred of the truth, so it will press closer together those who are the Lord's, and so far will obliterate the differences which Satan has so assiduously laboured to establish among the children of God. But the distinction between them and those of the world will become more and more visible.

Then there will be seen but two great parties in the world—the Lord's and Satan's. The former as one compact body, known by all to be separate from all else; the latter exhibiting the greatest contrariety among themselves, but united in its antagonism to Christ. Then the present liberality (rather latitudinarianism) of the day will cease. At the present time there are so many petty and independent religious associations that any thing like persecution on a large scale is simply impossible, because this demands more or less of power and authority, which no single body, whatever its influence, now possesses. Even now in these lands we see the greatest religious community in the state, and which is supported by secular authority, tottering on its base, and soon to descend to the level of its dissenting rivals.

An infidel liberality is the spirit of the age, which allows man to set aside the word of God and exalt his own notions. But a religious domination may be again felt; and when the

whole world are joined under one head, whatever form it may assume, superstitious or infidel, bigot or liberal, it will not permit a small minority of real Christians to live in peace. There may not be violent persecution, a rekindling of the fires of Smithfield, but there will be increasing scorn and contempt, and the saints will realize more than ever that they are not of the world, but the objects of its intense hate.

Thus shall it be in the completion of the age, the angels shall go forth and sever the wicked from the midst of the just, &c., &c. The main idea in the parable is the separating the *good* from the bad under the figure of putting the good fish into vessels, the bad being simply rejected. But here we have another thing, not given under a figure but in plain language, the separating of the *wicked* from the just. Both events take place in this world. The latter is the wind-up of the present age and ushers in the future; the former is rather *during* this present time. It is not the rapture of the church; which is not found in the parable. We may know where to put it, or before what events it will take place. And here we see the rapture takes place before the angels come to search out the wicked. Observe the difference; fishermen select the good, angels gather up the wicked. The Lord uses man as the instrument of blessing to man. He uses angels as the instruments of His judgments. The point of resemblance between the action in the parable, and that of the angels is that there will be a separating process at the end as there is now. But how different the object in view, how different the means or agents employed. The angels shall come forth and having gathered out the wicked, shall cast them into the furnace of fire.

So it was in the explanation of the tares. They shall "bind them in bundles to burn them—and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." (v. 30, 42.) They will gather out all offences, and purge the kingdom. They will know how to find out the wicked, and will separate the one from the other even though they be fellow-labourers in the same field, or two women grinding at the same mill.

We read in Heb. i. that the angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation, but the higher office of separating the members of His body from the evil of the world is given to the fishermen, i.e., to the Lord's apostles and servants. Even as He told Peter that He would make him a fisher of men. The ministry of

angels is rather to the individual; that of the Lord's fishermen has special reference to the church. So when actively engaged in the apostolic work of caring for and teaching the church of Jerusalem, Peter was the object of angelic care. Twice were the prison doors opened for him by the agency of these ministering spirits.

At the time of the end the angels will not only be the executors of the wrath of the Lamb, but they will be the active agents in gathering the Jews back into their land. (ch. xxiv. 31.) They serve God and do His bidding in respect to His providential dealings with Israel and with the world. But the Lord Himself and those who have His Spirit are the chief shepherd and shepherds of His flock.

The solemn judgment of the wicked marks the close of the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens. It is not the judgment of the great white throne. It is a judgment of the living not of the dead. It is described in chapter xxv. Remark also that while we have not the final destination of the good in the vessels, nor of the just in the following verse, we have that of the wicked. Why are we told of the wicked being cast into the fire, and not of the good being taken to heaven? Because it is a Similitude of the Kingdom which has reference only to the earth, the scene of the rule of the Son of Man; and when all offences are taken away, only the just will be left and righteousness shall reign over the earth. Hence the reason why the terms "wicked" and "just" are used here. They are Old Testament terms, and the term "*just*" is applied to New Testament saints when there is allusion made to Old Testament Scripture. So far as this parable shows we might conclude that the "good" in verse 48 are the same as the "just" in verse 49. From other Scriptures we learn that they are two distinct classes. The term "*just*" can include all believers in every age, and is so used; here it has a special application to the saints at that time, it is the contrast of the "wicked."

According to the calling and circumstances of the saints, so the special appellation given them of God, even as God Himself is made known by different names, which His divine wisdom saw fit, to the different conditions of His people on earth. To Abraham He was El-Shaddai, (God Almighty.) To Israel, Jehovah; to the Church, Father. Now *just* or *righteous* is a name given to the saints before Christ came, and is also specially given to those whom the angels leave in

their discriminating judgment in the parable. In both these times the righteous or just have an earthly calling in contradistinction to a heavenly one. But there are two other classes of God's saints distinct from those, and from each other. They are the church, and secondly those who are martyred after the church is gone. These latter are called specially "witnesses" or martyrs, inasmuch as they are all slain by the persecutor. The church is called, or rather the saints in the church are called "*saints*" as a special name. Not that it is not applied to others, even to things. The utensils of the tabernacle were called holy (same word as saint), and the essential signification of this word is *separation*. So the vessels were set apart for the use of the sanctuary. The saints of the Old Testament times were such because they served God, and were thus distinguished from the rest. But God, through Israel, was in direct communication with the world and the saints, the holy ones, were not called to be separate from it, (from its evil of course, or they would not have been just): but to acquire riches, power, to seek and hold a place of authority, to share in the government of the world were things not incompatible with devotedness to God. All the good things of this present life were promised to them; indeed they were both the evidence and the reward of righteousness. "I have been young and now am old"—said the Psalmist—"yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

In short, the Old Testament saints were to be separate from the evil, but were not called to forego their rights and position in the world. For God was maintaining His relationships with the earth in a direct and immediate way, as being the Governor of Israel. These relationships do not now subsist, they are in abeyance; and others of a higher and very special order are established. When the church is gone God will resume the old relationship with the earth, and the new will find its place in heaven. There cannot be on earth, and at the same time, both an earthly and a heavenly position for the saints of God. And there is absolutely now no such connexion between the New Testament saints and the earth, as there was in Old Testament times. Neither the place of authority, nor the striving for wealth are lawful for us. There is no promise to us that if faithful we should never want; rather we are promised afflictions and persecutions. That is, our place is not only separate but antagonistic; and consequently we must expect to feel the world's anger.

Hence we are "saints by calling," (Rom. i. 7, and 1 Cor. i. 2, not *called to be saints*.) The word is applied to us, not as a mere adjective, expressing a quality or condition as it was to the believer of old time, but as a name, a substantive; the special and distinctive name given to those who are the church of God. None beside are the *called saints*. And so it must and ought to be. The believers in all ages were to be in communion with God; and if He was maintaining relationship with the earth, so must the saint in the same way. But man has as far as he could broken the last link that connected him with God. Is not Christ rejected? Did not the world cast Him out? They killed the Son whom they ought to have revered to possess His inheritance. Thus man is stamped by the Word in the treatment of the Lord Jesus as a robber and a murderer. Well, now is the judgment of this world. Where then the place of the saint? Outside all—a complete and broad separation. The called saints are separate not only from the evil, but from the world as such; because Christ is on high, and is there as the rejected One. We are privileged to share His rejection. We do not accept the world's honours, nor are we to have any place in the world, save that of a pilgrim. We are, in regard to the position God has given to us, THE SEPARATE ONES; and no other body will ever have, or indeed would have a similar place.

So, too, the apocalyptic saints, they who are slain because of their testimony are specially the *witnesses* or martyrs, these are found on the earth after the church is gone, and when there is direct interference of God in judgment. There is no calling out from the world as now. The saints then will have their special character according to the circumstances. All believers are witnesses, but none have, or will witness in such tremendous times as they, when certain and violent death awaits every confessor.

In the same way a particular class is meant by the "just." They may have been hardly contemporaneous with the martyrs, but not having been slain for their testimony, form no part of the class. The church, the first-born ones, are seen in heaven before these martyrs are slain, after their death the angels come forth to purge the Kingdom by taking away all things that offend. All saints previous to this judgment are found among the "good put into vessels." The "just" points solely to the living on the earth who are brought through the tribulation. The saved remnant which form the

nucleus of the people, and the centre of the nations of the millennial earth.

When this is accomplished the "mysteries" will have ceased, the Kingdom proper will commence. The purging of the Kingdom while introductory to the reign of Christ, is yet a part of the present course of this age. The eclectic separation of the good is during this age, but more manifest as the end draws near. At the end the angels come. *How* they will do their work we are not told. I believe it will be a short, and perhaps a very sudden work. But we do know that it will be thorough and complete. "All things that offend" shall be taken.

What a solemn thought for the world. No tremendous change will take place to give warning of the immediate execution of wrath. The warnings of grace are now given. Grace which while inviting lost man to Christ, declares clearly and solemnly that that day will come as a thief. But the hardened and rebellious are then dreaming of security and progress. The business, duties, amiabilities, and pleasures go on as for years before. The wheels of the vast system do not appear ready to fall off from the axle. Not a part of the great machine but seems to work smoothly, and *progress* and *civilization* seems to point to the future greatness of man, and peace is the word on their lips. Suddenly as the lightning out of the east shines even unto the west, the Son of Man will appear. And the wicked severed from among the just will be cast into the furnace of fire. This is the way in which this busy thriving world will be brought to a sudden stand. Thus will the whole social fabric be crushed to its very foundations by the stone, and as chaff be driven before the wind. In the parable it is the angels who do this. They are the executioners of the King's wrath and judgment.

How touching the anxiety of our Lord that his disciples should understand. Before He warned them, saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Now He asks, "Have you understood all these things?" It is the anxiety of His love, that would bring us intelligently into the apprehension of His counsels. What a portion is ours? We shall be taken away before that time comes. Our Lord Himself will come for us. That rapture unnoticed by the world; or if our absence be marked, will occasion as much joy as wonder. They whom the world hated are gone, it knows not whither. But what marvellous grace that has so saved us, and brought

us so nigh to God that He reveals His purposes of judgment to us, and what He is going to do after we have left this world. What effect should such a revelation have upon us? "What manner of persons ought *we* to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" Let Peter answer even as he put the question, "wherefore beloved seeing that *we* look for such things, *let us* be diligent that *we* may be found of him in peace without and blameless." Amen. R. B.

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"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

"Forgetting those things which are behind."—PHIL. III. 13.

"We will remember Thy love."—SONG I. 4.

Lord Jesus, let me all forget,  
 But that unfathomed love of Thine;  
 Which pleased itself to have me set  
 In heaven;—and in Thy likeness shine.

The ear hath heard,—the heart believed,  
 The wonders of redeeming love:  
 But now the eye of Faith hath seen  
 The place I own with thee above.

And when in Thy blest presence, Lord,  
 Thou dost Thy heavenly joys unfold;  
 My heart can only bow and say—  
 Truly "the half hath not been told!"

For thou hast brought to this blest place  
 The heart that once so far did roam;  
 Where I can gaze upon Thy face;  
 And in Thy presence feel *at home!*

And Thou hast broken every tie  
 That kept my heart so long below:  
 They shall not cost me e'en a sigh,  
 Since Thee I've better learned to know!

O give me such a sight of *Thee*,  
 In all Thine unvailed glory now;  
 That every earthly thought may flee,  
 And all my heart in worship bow!

'Round me distracting sounds of life  
 Rise harsh and feverish in their tone,  
 O make a silence through their strife,  
 And let me hear *Thy* voice alone!

Henceforth! that farewell word of Thine  
 Shall bid each earthly memory flee,  
 Joyful I take the bread and wine—  
 And thus, my Lord, *remember Thee!*

Not *empty* baskets Lord I bring  
 For Thee to fill with living grace,  
 But *full* ones now I'd offer Him  
 Who only seeks the true heart's praise !

"Worthy of homage," Lord, Thou art,  
 Such I would offer to Thee now ;  
 The praise and worship of a heart  
 That only can *in silence* bow !

Here all the world that round me lies  
 Grows dim and distant to my view,  
 Upon *Thyself* I fix my eyes,  
 Sole object for the heart that's true !

Henceforth ! while living *for* Thee here,  
 And linked *with* Thee in heaven above :  
 I'd walk as one whose heart holds dear,  
 The memory of Thy matchless love !

## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

"E. G. D." seeks to know the propriety of continuing to ask for many things of the Lord—such as more of the Spirit's power; increase of faith; conversion of relatives, &c. Or whether, when these requests have been once laid before Him, should we leave them in His hands?

A. God exercises our hearts and our faith in delaying to give the answer to our prayers at times. The earnestness of our prayer will be according to the exigency of our need, and the consciousness that He alone can give the answer. The heart is exercised and kept in dependence, waiting on Him for the reply. Faith is kept alive. Other sources are not looked to when the soul has learned that He alone can do what is needed. It is a mighty engine, that of prayer. Fitting expression of the new-born soul's dependence on God, in contrast to that nature which ever would be independent of Him, though it cannot escape His righteous judgment.

Daniel had to wait in fastings and mournings for three whole weeks at one time before he received the reply. (Chap. x.) At another time, "Whiles I was speaking," he says, the answer came. (Chap. ix.)

It marks the fact that we are not indifferent to the result when the heart can in earnest entreaty wait upon God.

We may find, like Paul, that it is better for us that our desires were withheld. He learned also the reason why they were withheld after his thrice repeated prayer; thus he could

boast in that which was the taunt of his enemies, and the trial of his friends. (2 Cor. xii.)

We need to be "filled with the Spirit." We need that our faith may grow. Many are the needs of our hearts, as of others; and if God is pleased to bless His people, He exercises their hearts in prayer. Paul was indebted to some praying sister, perhaps, who could agonize in prayer before the Lord for those gifts with which he carried on his service in the gospel-field. He could agonize in prayer for those he never saw—(Col. ii. 1)—and Epaphras, too, could labour earnestly (agonize) in prayer, for those he knew and loved. (Col. iv. 12.)

In the midst of our cares and conflicts we have to "be careful for nothing," but to "let our requests be made known to God." He who has no cares, God, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. But we have also to "continue in prayer." We have also to "watch in the same," and withal "with thanksgiving" for His ever opened ear. One of the exhortations in Romans xii. 12 is, "continuing instant in prayer;" "pursuing," as it might be.

The very "importunity" of the man at the unseasonable hour of midnight, was the occasion of his obtaining the loaves. (Luke xi. 8.) One can lay down no rules in such cases. The truly exercised heart gets its own answer from God. At times we can, with simple confidence, "make known," and commit the request to God. At others the heart is conscious that it cannot but cry to God until the heart is at rest as to the petition. He will not give it till His own time, and meanwhile the soul is kept in earnest exercise; faith is tested, and patience tried, and the heart watches and waits on Him. Again, such is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us; and if we know that He hears us, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him. (1 John v. 14, 15.) He listens to everything which is in accordance with His will. He cannot fail in power, and we get the reply. The true heart would ask nothing contrary to His mind and will.

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#### FRAGMENT.

THE moment we step out of our nothingness, we step into it!

## FORGIVENESS AND LIFE.

Mark 5, ii. 1-12.

THERE are four remarkable scenes grouped together in these passages, which, taken together, form a most instructive picture of Christ's work with and in man.

There is little more than a passing notice of the temptation of Christ. It is casually mentioned in chap. i. 13. It has, however, an immense significance. In the temptation we find Him as God's Man upon earth—not putting forth His power to overcome and bind the strong man, but conquering him by simple obedience to the word of God. The strong man, Satan, had kept his palace and his goods in peace, but here was a stronger than he, binding him and leaving him utterly powerless by simple obedience to God's word—by the word of His lips, keeping Himself from the paths of the destroyer. (Ps. xvii. 4). Man had fallen under the dominion of Satan, hearkened to him at the beginning and taken him for his God, and was driven out of God's presence for his sin. The fear of death and a coming judgment possessing his heart, which, do what he will, he cannot shake off. Liable, too, in such a state, to be drawn deeper into ruin and destruction by the enemy. The Son of God comes in to deliver him out of this terrible bondage, and becomes a man: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death (for He must die to accomplish it) he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (Heb. ii. 14, 15.) He entered into the last stronghold of the enemy, breaks its bars asunder, and rises out of it in the power of endless life that was in Him, having borne all that the righteousness of God required against our sin when entering into the place of death.

"And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, saying, 'Let us alone, what have we to do with thee thou Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.'" The effect of the presence of the Lord in the midst of sinners here is that it brings out distinctly that Satan had undisputed dominion over man. Where sinners are all down at the common level under his power, it needs some one upon

whom he has no claim to discover this. The moment then that Christ, who had bound him, came into the synagogue, the possessed man cried out in the presence of his deliverer.

If this scene discloses that Satan had dominion over man, the next describes the condition of man under Satan's power. "But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them," (v. 30, 31.) A fever aptly figures the restless condition of man under the power of the enemy—running to and fro after pleasure, or gain, or vice, or folly—the corruptions of the world governing the heart, which has no response for aught else. As the proverb describes the ways of the world's corruption to keep the heart busied in this busy scene, "Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable that thou canst not know them." (Prov. v. 6.) A busy, shifting, variable scene is dazzling the hearts of men, the enemy uses it to fill the heart to the exclusion of Christ lest the soul should ponder the path of life. The Lord Jesus comes and lifts up the fevered one out of this condition. Another atmosphere dawns upon the soul, which now is set free to minister to Christ.

All this gives us the power of Christ in breaking the fetters with which Satan has bound poor sinners, and the deliverance He gives, without showing how the soul is brought into the value of His work. Neither heart or conscience are in exercise in these two cases. It was God Himself, active in His love, coming down to poor sinners to snap the chains, and, unsought, to deliver them from the enemy. But God deals morally with the heart and conscience of sinners.

In the third scene we find a soul in this state. A poor leper, conscious of uncleanness and defilement, comes to Jesus. Observe that here it is the leper who came to Jesus. Jesus had gone to the possessed man, and to the woman in the fever. Here he came to Jesus. Thus we have the two sides of the picture. This poor defiled one comes and beseeches Jesus, kneeling down to Him with the cry, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus is the One who can meet his case, and he is conscious of this. How many souls are in this state, convinced of sin, and that Christ alone can meet their sin; and yet they are not able to say, He has cleansed me. Now, this man came and made his request,

and got his request. "Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed." Now, this man came *with a request* to Jesus, embracing the need of which he was conscious. He limits his faith to the measure of his consciousness. Many err thus, and fail to learn the extent of the salvation of God.

In the next narrative we find a much more blessed lesson. The soul does not come with the request, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." The need was simply brought to Him and laid at His feet—no suggestions made as to how He was to meet it. The Lord was not thus limited. Faith here makes no limitations or suggestions, and leaves Christ room to act according to *His* knowledge of the need, and *His* way of relieving it, in full character with Himself, and according to the full dictates of his own heart.

This scene of the paralytic illustrates the incapacity of man to come to Christ! If the sinner is incapable of coming to a Saviour full of power, and love, and grace, to meet his case. If he has no power to come and take the blessing, what is to be done? Faith must come in! He "saw their faith." The thought in many souls before deliverance is, "I see the goodness and mercy of the Lord to meet my need, and I am conscious of my own sinful state. I have discovered that in God's sight I am a sinner, and without excuse; yet I don't know how to lay hold upon Him or His work. I am invited to lay hold of him, and I can't do it." This very state of soul is a proof that God *has* applied the work of Christ to you. If you have, by divine teaching, discovered your sinful state, and that your only hope and trust is in Christ, God has applied his word to you. A soul in this state has need to learn that it has *no strength* to lay hold on Him. It is not when you have strength to accept Him that His work applies. It is "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.)

This paralytic does not limit the Lord as the leper did to the relief of the need which he had discovered. The case, in all its misery, was laid at his feet. The world hinders a soul too in thus getting near Christ. But where faith is, it is not stopped by the difficulties. The Lord can now act according to the fulness of His heart; and He looks to the root of the matter, relieving what the conscience needs first, with,

“Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” But this is not all His work; this is only the relief of the conscience that it may learn more; and the Lord does not stop there. His work is not merely relieving the conscience of its sins, and letting the soul go on again in the old condition of things. Much of the presentation of the gospel goes no further than this.

The Lord now communicates *life* by His word to the paralyzed limbs. Hitherto the helpless nature had yielded to its weakness and lay on its bed. Now, with one life-giving word the helpless one has strength, life is communicated, and he goes away in the power of this new life, bearing the couch before them all! It is not only that sins are put away, but life is communicated—the two cannot be separated. Until the second is learned there is no *practical* result, and no glory to God. Thus the very thing to which nature, in its helpless state, yielded—a temper, or lust, or folly, becomes the very thing I resist most. It becomes the burden for my shoulder in the power and possession of eternal life.

Beloved friends, may you learn the extent of His work—God’s work—in your souls. It is not only relieving you of your sins, but uniting you by the Spirit of God with Him who has so relieved your soul. Then you learn the power for your walk here. He has bestowed upon you a life which not only can, but which, if you allow it to act, must live to God. The law did not bestow life. It prohibited the evil nature from which Christ died to deliver you. The gospel, on the other hand, first bestows the life, and then directs and guides it. Once I learn this I am conscious that whatever Christ bids me do I am bound to do. I do not stop to look at my ability to do what He directs, but I look at the power of Him who works through the weakness and incapacity of man. He who Himself is my life, and “when I am weak then am I strong.”

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### FRAGMENTS.

No one could look upon Christ dying on the Cross, and say, “He is not enough for my sins.”

The pretence to “do our best” is a denial of our badness. The first thing is to take the place of badness.

The judgment upon Lot’s wife marked the value of implicit obedience to an escaping people.

## CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

## PHILIPPIANS.

THE Epistle to the Philippians leads us into a very peculiar apprehension of the Christian's path. *Christian experience* is before us, and not the doctrines of Christianity.

It is this which characterizes the Epistle throughout. We find in it that the soul has learned that which renders it superior to all the testing of circumstances through which it has to pass. This is why I call it peculiar, for in saying it is Christian experience, one says a great deal, for it is really the life of Christ in the saint, tested by circumstances, but found under the testing superior to them all. And it is well for our souls to look this in the face, and to see how far our own spirits in tone, and thought, and mind, answer to this each day.

And here I would remark, that as it is the Christian's path through the world that is before us in this epistle, we shall find that salvation is always put at the end of the path as a thing to be obtained. Thus the apostle says in the first chapter (v. 19), "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." So in the third chapter, when he is speaking of himself, he does not say, he is in Christ, but "that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Christ is the object for which he is running. It is in the same character he speaks of righteousness. He does not say here "made the righteousness of God in him," but you see him casting away his righteousness, which he had by the law, that he might be found in Christ, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Again, in the second chapter, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you." Always, you see, looking to the end for salvation. It is thus scripture always speaks of salvation, when it takes up our responsibility as Christians. But in speaking thus, such scriptures always suppose us set in redemption, and then address us upon our responsibility, as being in a settled relationship with God.

It is most important to see this, that we are first set in the place of redemption, before we are called upon to run to the end of the race. In looking into this Epistle you will see how the path lies through all kinds of adverse circum-

stances, but at the same time you will see that there is a power come in by Christianity that supposes this, that in running the Christian course, we should be always glorifying Christ, and entirely above the circumstances in which we are found.

Before pressing upon you what the path is, and the responsibility flowing from our place as Christians, I will say a few words upon the exercises which the soul goes through before it can take this place. In fact, these exercises before redemption is known are kept entirely distinct in God's word from the exercises and responsibility which characterize us as Christians, after having received the knowledge of redemption. It is most important that we should be clear as to this, for one finds that persons are constantly mixing up their responsibility with their standing.

Responsibility always flows from the place in which we are. You must be in a relationship before you can have the responsibilities, duties, if you please, of the relationship. I must be a child before I can act as a child ought to act to his father; and so with the woman, she must be a wife before her responsibility as a wife begins. Now sin has not destroyed our responsibility to God as His creatures. But sin having come in, the responsibility of man as such must end in judgment. The soul must learn this before it can know redemption, which delivers us from that standing altogether. It is when we know that Christ has met this responsibility in the cross, and that we are accepted in Him, as gone on high, that Christian responsibility begins; whereas our responsibility as sinners refers to our acceptance. As to this responsibility, we have God's testimony that we are lost. But souls individually go through a process shorter or longer, before coming to this in the conscience, before, as Scripture puts it, "submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." It may be learnt suddenly or it may be a longer process, but it must be learnt, "That," as the apostle says, "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The deeper the ploughing up in learning this the better, but whether it be by a process shorter or longer, we must come to this judgment of what we are in the presence of God, before we can know what God has wrought *through* and *in* Christ to deliver us from this condition altogether. Before we can learn that, as regards our standing in Adam as sinners, we are redeemed

out of it by Christ, and now we are in Him, accepted in the Beloved. The old state and standing is gone, and the believer's place is in a standing and condition, which God has made for him in Christ. The angels see us in Christ up there. Christ is in us down here—do those around, does the world see that as clearly?

These exercises of the soul which precede this knowledge of our settled Christian place are all most valuable and useful, in order to teach us thoroughly what we are, and that our standing is *not* in the *flesh*, and we get settled peace by knowing we are not in the flesh at all. We put our seal to the truth of God, in the judgment He puts upon us, and our souls, having divine light, say, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" not only as a doctrine in Scripture, but saying it as true of ourselves in the presence of God. It is then we get settled peace. Christ has gone through the judgment, and all the fruits of the flesh have been borne by Christ on the cross, and are put away for ever, so that the whole thing is put away from God's sight. But more than that, Christ glorified God by doing it, and has entered *into God's presence as man on high*. He has entered as conqueror, and He sends down the Comforter to dwell in us, so that I can say, my standing is no more in the flesh, in the first Adam at all, but in the second! I was lost, but He has died to put away sin, He has been made sin and has borne our sins, so that the nature and its acts are all gone, and I am no more in the flesh, but in Christ, united to Him by the Spirit, and thus a new creation in Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," is my consciousness now.

Thus we are delivered entirely from our responsibility as belonging to the first Adam, before Christian responsibility begins. When in the flesh I was responsible to God, and was hoping to be saved, and found myself lost on that ground. Christian responsibility flows from another standing and relationship altogether. I did belong to the first Adam, and was lost. I do belong to the last Adam, and am saved. I now am in Him, in the new man. There is a responsibility connected with that. You find in this epistle, not the doctrines stated to bring us into this place, though there are statements of doctrine, for instance, the statement in the third chapter of the righteousness of God, as we find

in all the word of God, but what characterizes the epistle is the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the Christian, when *he* is in this place of acceptance, and not the *doctrines* about the place.

We have to judge ourselves, whether, if in this place, we are using this true liberty, as James says, according to the "perfect law of liberty;" walking as those who have died to sin, and are alive to God through Jesus Christ.

Now there is another remark I would make. Sin is never mentioned in the epistle, and this comes out remarkably in the third chapter, when he is speaking of justification. Even there sin is not mentioned. It is his righteousness, and not his sins, that he casts away; so that he may have a better righteousness, even "the righteousness which is of God by faith." It is not that the flesh was altered in Paul. The flesh never grows better. Paul needed a thorn to keep it down, but what we find in this epistle is that a *power has come in and dwells in us*, which leaves us always without excuse, if there is a thought even that is not under the control of the Spirit of God. I grant that it is not always at the moment of trial that you have power to resist, but if there had been watchfulness and distrust of self, you would not have got into that condition.

There may be liberty of heart with God, and confidence in Him, so as to say, I am a child of God, and I know my place in Christ, and can rejoice in it, as the testimony of the riches of God's mercy. All this may be true, and I suppose it, but is there that practical occupation of the heart with Christ, that you can say, "to me to live is Christ?" Is there the pressing after Him to win Him? Is there "the growing up into Him in all things?" We can say, "He has given me a place with His Son. He has united me to Him, and I am in His child." We may rejoice in this being our place, and that we are thus in Him, and that He will display His glory in us throughout the countless ages of eternity. This is what the Holy Ghost gives us now to enjoy in Him. We are of God, part of His new creation in Christ, and in this we find all is perfection. "All things are of God." Well, then, the believer can say, "I am of God. I have a place which is the testimony of the riches of His grace. He has given me a place with and in His Son, that I may be like Him and enjoy this nearness to God which Christ has. But if Christ is in the presence of

God for me, I am here in this world for Him." It is there where God has set us. All is perfect in Christ. The old man crucified with Him, put off with his deeds, and the new man put on, but yet as a matter of fact we have the flesh to contend with, and we have a scene to go through where everything is temptation. Consequently, the character we take is overcoming, realizing the presence of God with us in the midst of evil, but because God's strength is with the Christian, we find in the Apostle's path through the Epistle, uniform, constant, unvarying superiority over the evil, so that he could say, "To me to live is Christ." Now, dear brethren, I ask is it thus with you? I am not speaking of outward conduct. I suppose your life to be blameless before others. Where it is sin, that others can see, then it is a case for the discipline of the Church, but I am not supposing this of any here. I suppose that your life is outwardly what is right and becoming, but then our outward conduct is but a part of our life,—the far greater part of our daily life goes on in our thoughts and feelings. It is in what passes within hour by hour that we really live. Well then, in speaking for myself, and supposing much the same of you, even in looking back upon this day, one cannot say of oneself, "For me to live was Christ." I don't doubt it, we ask, as being true of you in the main. I grant that your own conscience will know whether even in the main it has been true of you to-day; but I come now to your thoughts and their sources. Was Christ in them all this day? Was the Spirit the source of them all? Surely in looking back only one day, one sees that a thousand things have travelled over the road of one's soul which neither Christ nor the Spirit let in.

We have a beautiful figure of this guardianship of the entire man under Christ and the Spirit, in the Old Testament type of the cleansing of the leper, where blood was put on the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot, and then the oil put upon the blood. Every avenue to the mind, guarded in this double way by the blood and the oil on the ear, that nothing might pass, which was unbecoming Christ's glory or the Spirit's presence. Then every action of the man, guarded in this double way by the blood and the oil on the thumb of the right hand, and so with the foot, that the whole walk should be under the same guardian care. Surely in looking back

only one day, we shall find much that has passed the blood, that Christ did not let in. Many thoughts and desires not coming from the Spirit.

The Lord give unto us, beloved brethren, that there may be such an occupation of heart with Christ, such a living in the fear of God, such a walking in the gracious guidance of the Spirit, that we may be able to say like the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ, and to die, gain."

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### CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

CHRISTIANITY substitutes obedience to a *person* for that of obedience to a *law*. In legal obedience a person fulfils a contract which he has undertaken. Christian obedience is like that of a slave to his master whom he loves. He does what he tells him without a will of his own.

If I bid my child to do three things, and he only does two of them which he likes to do, and takes his own way in the third, insubjection of will is as much evinced by his disobeying in one point as if he had in all.

Christ's obedience was perfect, and is our pattern. He was put through every trial to see if there was in Him an unwillingness to obey—that is sin—and it could not be found. In the garden of Gethsemane He chose rather to have God's face hidden than fail to obey. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. There is nothing so humble or so unselfish as obedience. It supposes that we have no will of our own.

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### FRAGMENT.

God will take care *what* you go through; do you take care *how* you go through it.

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### "THE OFFERING UP OF THE GENTILES."

ROMANS XV. 16.

"Because of the grace given to me by God, for me to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the nations, *carrying on*, as a sacrificial service, the message of good tidings of God in order that the offering up of the nations might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." (Rom. xv. 16; lit. translation.)

The full meaning of this verse can only be seen, I believe, in connection with verses 8 and 9. "Now, I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of

God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.”

The mission of Jesus Christ was primarily to the Jews, with a *consequent blessing*, through them, to the Gentiles. But He was cut short in His work, for the Jews rejected Him—“We will not have this man to reign over us.” Therefore, as yet, the Gentiles, *as nations*, do not put their trust in Him (v. 12). He does not reign over them.

For the blessing of the nations *must flow through the Jews*. “God shall bless us (Jews), and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

Paul, therefore, is chosen to carry on this work, as he says—“The grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,” carrying on the message of good tidings. He had not only a distinct call and revelation from the ascended Christ to make known the mystery (Eph. iii.), but he was chosen, *as a Jew*, to carry on the mission of Christ to the Gentiles as such. This explains the use of passages from the prophets, belonging critically to a future day, as in verses 9, 10, 11, 12 of this chapter. The Gentiles are not to be losers through the unbelief of the Jew. Although that manifested blessing which was to come to them through the Jew is still in abeyance, there is nevertheless a presentation of Christ to the Gentile, *as such*, corresponding to the presentation of Christ to the Jew. And to this work the Apostle Paul was called by the Lord Jesus by special revelation from heaven, “To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light . . . that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified.” (Acts xxvi. 18.)

There is beautiful fitness as regards the instrument chosen to carry on this Word of life. That the blessing may still flow in God’s order. A Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, receives the commission as minister of Jesus Christ. He does not go up to Jerusalem to receive his credentials from thence; there is no owning of the nation, nor of that apostate city as a centre of blessing for the earth; but, in the person of Paul, the prescribed order is maintained.

Thus in the mercy of God they partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree, and not one Gentile who, in the purpose of God, would have been blessed, is allowed to suffer through the unbelief of the Jew. Moreover, although those

quotations from Old Testament Scriptures in verses 9, 10, 11, 12 regarding the Gentiles, will have their true fulfilment when the Jew has his proper place in the earth, yet are they here used by the apostle in connection with their present blessing.

Now, as in the humiliation of Christ, the Jews received Him not, and are for the time cast away; so during his rejection the Gentiles, in like manner, own Him not, continue not in the goodness of God, and must, in the crisis of their unbelief and self-will, also receive the judgment of God—"Thou also shall be cut off." Thus, both Jew and Gentile corporately reject the "Messiah," the "seed of the woman," and bring out this great truth, that blessing for man on earth must flow from Him who is risen from the dead, the *beginning* of the creation of God. Paul, the pattern Jew, with a mission direct from the risen Christ, cannot inaugurate blessing for the Gentile on earth.

But, as in every previous dispensation, there has always been a path known to faith, and a secret order of blessing underneath that which through the unfaithfulness of man has failed; so now, during the casting away of the Jew, and the growing apostacy of the Gentile, the Lord is gathering out from the Jew "a remnant according to the election of grace;" and from among the nations "a people for His name," who together form the Church—the body of Christ—neither Jew nor Gentile, but the one new man in Christ Jesus.

This is the present joy of His heart, the compensation for having, as regards Israel, apparently laboured in vain. (Is. xlix.) Thus, in the un failing resources of our God, He has treasured up in the purposes of His heart that mystery, now revealed, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 25, 26), which, without interfering with the exact fulfilment of His promises, and in the exact order of blessing prescribed from the first, brings out now a pre-fulfilment of it, *evident to faith*; and by which, in the coming day of *manifestation* of the sons of God, He will make known the *exceeding* riches of His grace, even in His kindness toward us by Christ Jesus.

There is another thought—verse 16—"That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." This appears to be the character of the meat offering, and especially of the wave loaf baken with

leaven, as in Lev. xxiii. 16, 17. It is called "a new meat offering," but *two* wave loaves constitute it. It follows upon the waving of the first-fruits—Christ risen and accepted. Fifty days afterwards the loaves were offered—"they are the first-fruits unto the Lord." In view of His mission to the Gentiles, as filling up what remained of the work committed to Christ, this would appear to be an allusion to the presentation of the Gentile to God—"For through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

There is a wonderful symmetry or harmony in all God's actings. Although man may seem to interfere with His purposes, His counsels they shall stand. He will work, and who shall let it? His prerogative is to bring His own good out of man's evil; and every effort to set aside His authority in the earth not only ends in the overthrow of His enemies, but affords scope for a still further unfolding of His grace and manifestation of Himself. "O the *depth* both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" "To Him be glory for ever. Amen."

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## HOW TO HAVE A SINGLE EYE.

If you would have a single eye, you must have a single object, for this simple reason that you must have nothing else to engage your eye. If the Lord Jesus were your only object you would be more independent of all other influences, and you would be consciously more engaged with Him.

Oh! it is a fine moment for the soul when it knows that He is its object, and that while engaged with Him everything else is subject to Him. The ease with which we should move about, having this one transcendent object elevating our souls above any lower influences here; and at the same time leading us to acknowledge everything of Him which meets us on our way. How much happier we should be if our eyes only saw the Lord Jesus wherever we went. If an enemy or a hindrance were occurrent, even then my eye rested on the Lord of Life and Power. And again, if it met with any one or thing belonging to Him, it were seen in contact with him—submerged in Himself.

This perfect dependence upon Him, and the beautiful independence of others; the gracious thoughts of every one

which are derived from a single-eyed engagement with Christ would be seen in us.

It is most blessed in any degree to realize, and as necessary to the spiritual life as the air we breathe, when once we get in any measure used to it—that Christ is all to us! You are frightened and balked by that which is not Christ, and you are consequently not at home, or in communion with that which is not of Him. You do not make Him first, or give Him His due place when you are embarrassed, and consequently when you meet Him, and His hands are on the lock of the door, you will not rise and open to Him. (Cant. v. 5). But if you have not used Him when you needed Him, your heart has misgivings and distrust when He is beside you. The more we use any friend the more we know that we may use such an one, and when we hesitate to use him, when that one alone could help us, either through any doubt of his love, or of his ability, we surely cannot meet such an one next time with the same ease and self-possession.

Be assured that all our purposelessness arises from this; we do not *use* the Lord—the only One who could help us—the One who desires to help us, and therefore our adversaries baffle us, and more than this, when there is no adversary and the Lord comes by, we are like Peter, naked, in no state to go to Him, or we are in bed, and in no heart to receive Him.

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## FRUITBEARING.

JOHN XV.

It is to be remarked, that in this part of the gospel of John (xiii-xvii.) you get, not the sovereignty of grace towards us which saves, but our individual responsibility and blessing consequent upon our known relationship with the Father as we walk in this place. Christ is looking for their walk as disciples *consequent* upon their position as clean through His word. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him.” This is the order here.

It is not “We love him because he first loved us;” but “He that loveth me shall be loved.” He first puts us in a place of favour, and then there is the consequent responsibility. There is not, of course, any question of

uncertainty as to salvation; but He has put us into a certain position as saved—in which through grace, we are to glorify Him.

The path in which He enjoyed His Father's love was a path of unclouded joy, and it was a path of undivided obedience. He here shews His disciples if they are to walk in the light and favour of His countenance, they must walk in the same path as He did Himself. We should so walk, that we should have Christ's joy fulfilled in us.

There are one or two details connected with this, to which I wish to refer. When I speak of an unclouded joy belonging to my place in *heaven*, it is another thing—we are simply perfect if looked at in Christ in heavenly places. Here He is looking at Himself as on *earth*, and we are also seen on earth, and it is as *here* below that He would have His joy remain in us and our joy full.

Christ here takes the place of the true vine in which Israel had totally failed. His disciples were the branches, and He looks at them to bear fruit *down here*. You find all through this chapter He puts our responsibility first. He says, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." He calls upon them to abide in Him in order that He may be able to abide in them. If we look at the fourteenth chapter the order is reversed. There it is "Ye in me" first. It is not here a question of safety or of God's keeping them on to the end, but entirely one of fruitbearing. We are called in the active reverence of our hearts to stay continually with Christ; to *abide* in Him; to draw strength continually from Him in active diligence of heart. The words "*I in you*" in this passage are the *consequence* of our first abiding in Him. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." That we may bear fruit is what He is thinking of here, and so be truly His disciples. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."

"If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." By abiding in Christ I get guidance of heart; for then the words of Christ direct all my thoughts. Here I also get the power of abiding. Complete dependence on Christ, and His words abiding in me, I can ask what I will, for it will be what *He*

*wills*—and it shall *be done!* There is in this such dependence on, and living with Christ, that my mind, and will, and thoughts, are all formed by Christ's words; and I have full power to ask what I will. He was constantly looking to, and living by, His Father; with Jesus, it was always perfect fruitbearing; and we are His disciples if we follow Him in that path.

“As the Father hath loved me *so* have I loved you.” It is not here simply the eternal love of the Father to the Son, but divine love to one walking in this world, whose word was, “I do always those things that *please him.*” This was a love which took up the disciples as walking down here. He could put them in the same relation to Himself that He was in to His Father. “*As* the Father hath loved me (the Son) *so* have I loved you; continue ye in my love.” They were walking here on earth in that blessed relationship which He Himself had known.

He wants us not only to abide in Him and get strength, so as to bear fruit to His and the Father's glory, but that we may abide in the continual, uninterrupted sense and enjoyment of His love. He gives Himself as our example; “as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.” I need not say *how* HE abode in it! “If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love.” Still our responsibility—obedience to Christ's words. It is not here a question of the Father loving the Son, as from eternity the beloved one. It was as He is seen walking in this world in a path of perfect obedience, and abiding in Him. If there is in us a spirit of simple obedience to Him, we abide in His love. If we do a thing because He has said it, we abide in His love.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you,” that is, “*abide* in you;” the same word all through. He had no joy from the world. He had perfect joy in the Father. His joy was in bringing forth fruit to the Father's glory. He is thus shewing to us how in fruit-bearing we can have joy and blessedness down here.

“That your joy might be full.” That is what He wants us to have—fulness of joy: and it is not from the world, but the kind of joy He had. It is His desire that we should have *His own joy*. “That MY JOY should remain in you, and that your joy should be full.” So it is to the heart that is walking with and abiding in Him. If we have joy; it is

*His joy.* If it is reproach ; it is His reproach. *It is His,* whatever it is, to the heart that walks in the blessed consciousness of being in the same path that He trod here ; and nothing else will do for the devoted heart. We ought not to be content without it, without the sense that we are abiding in His love, keeping His commandments, and walking *like Him*, in the fullest enjoyment of the Father's love. Taking His words as our guide, keeping His commandments, and abiding thus in Him. He puts this confidence in us, but all connected *with responsibility.*

“This is my commandment that ye love one another, as *I have loved you.*” If I look at the love of Christ for them what I see in it is, that it was above all the wretchedness of the poor disciples—above all their failure. When I am not above a thing it acts upon myself, but when I am entirely above it I can think *for* it all, as well as with it. The Lord being above all the failure and wretchedness could, if a right feeling, feel *with* His disciples : if an infirmity, He could feel *for* them. He can enter into it all in a divine way, because of a *divine mind* ; and with divine goodness, because He is above it all ! His word to us is, “Love one another, as *I have loved you.*” By clinging close to Christ, and learning from Him, we can love in the same kind of way in which He loved, and in this way we can recognise anything good, and of Him in our brethren, and learn to esteem others better than ourselves ; that is what He expects—looks for in us. It is impossible unless we keep with Christ. What a path was His here ! There never was such *an isolated man as Christ*, and yet there *never was one who felt for others as He did !*

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends ; ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He does not say He is the friend of sinners here ; He speaks of their being *His* friends if they did what He commanded. Still our responsibility. He is treating them with perfect confidence. The true disciple He treats with the confidence of being *His friend*, otherwise He was betraying the confidence of His father in telling His secrets. If I go to a person on a matter of business, I merely tell him my *business*, and have done with him ; but if I go to a *friend*, I can tell him all that is on my own mind, even about what does not concern him at all, having full confidence in his love and his interest in what concerns me.

“Henceforth I call you not servants but friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” Whatever I have had in my heart I have told you. *What* a place he sets us in! How we ought to hate ourselves for the constant way in which self hinders us from this blessed place of enjoyment! But what a comfort to the restored soul it is to find that when we have learnt totally to distrust ourselves, Christ strengthens us and trusts us. He did so to Peter by those three questions—“Lovest thou me?” When Peter replies, “You know, Lord, that I love you.” He puts confidence in him, and says, “Feed my sheep; feed my lambs.” But until all that is in us is perfectly humbled, He cannot put trust or confidence in us. How could he do it when we cannot trust ourselves.

“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you.” Here we get the source of the world’s hatred. Not only is it our walk that the world does not like us for, but for the *place* Christ has chosen us for “out of the world”—a peculiar place, that we may be a peculiar people. It is because they are *Christ’s* that the world cannot like them. We should let our light shine forth, and our confession of Christ be so distinct, that the world might know who they are to reckon the good works to—that we belong to Christ. We must take that place as thus confessing Christ here. He takes us to be *His* people, and we walk upon *that* ground. Of course there must be consistency on it. He looks for it; so does the world! Whatever would not suit Christ would not suit the Christian. We should not take that name to dishonour it. He has called us out to *go with Him*. How far are our hearts prepared to take our place before all the world and say, “I am Christ’s; I belong alone to Him.” If, in reply, they ask you what right you have to take that place, and say, “We, too, belong to Christ,” you can ask them to come and take their place with Him, else how could you own them as His. What we look for is to abide in Christ, and to bear fruit to His and the Father’s glory. It is a lowly place—a blessed place; one of entire dependence upon Him, for without Him we can do nothing. May we know its exceeding blessedness for His name’s sake. Amen.

## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

“P.” What is the “ministry” (*διακονια*) of 2. Cor. iv. 1? Is it the ministry of the apostle, or that which he ministered? It could hardly be confined to his ministry merely, as he uses the same word, though translated “ministration,” in c. iii. 7, 8, 9: where it is the thing ministered?

A. It is the apostle’s ministry, but ministry of and characterized by what he speaks of. This is a common ambiguity in English. Hope is what passes in my mind, (faith, hope,) but my hope is laid up in heaven. Thought a good thought is thought objectively; or we are of much thought, is the habit of thinking, in the man, and so of others; in chap. iii. the subject matter—law or gospel is the ministration, *i.e.*, the thing ministered; but it was ministered by Paul, and therefore his ministry—a candle was lit up in a lantern; it was itself the light—the candle’s light; but his light, because he carried it. God had shone in his heart to give forth the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. His ministry was this knowledge, still he ministered it, and so it was his ministry.

“F.” Why in 1 Tim. iii. 15, do we get the “Living” God? Why “Living?”

A. “The Son of the living God” (Matt. xvi. 16, 17) is what the Church was built upon. It is the power which has brought it above dying man, and withal is abiding. It is a term of power and dignity above idols, above death in man. He trusts in the living God (1. Tim. iv. 10). We are converted to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. iv.). See Acts xiv. 15: We “preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God,” &c. Well, this is His assembly on earth (1 Tim. iii. 15).

“D.” As believers, the Holy Ghost dwells in us. Having believed, we are sealed until the day of redemption, and He is the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. i. 13, 14). He will eventually quicken our mortal bodies, as we find in Rom. viii. 11. Is there any thought in Scripture as to his *dwelling in us* for ever?

A. There are no specific Scriptures that I know which state that the Holy Ghost will abide in us for ever. But His action in spiritual power is essential to our power in life. The Spirit is life, and it surely is not to be taken away

as power of enjoyment in heaven. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free." We are to be fully conformed to the image of God's Son; and we find Him a Man risen from the dead, giving commands through the Holy Ghost after His resurrection. (Acts i. 2.) We shall have the Holy Ghost thus after our resurrection, and His divine energy will be wholly free to guide and direct in the service committed to us by our God, and in unhindered power of joy and worship. This is now checked, because of His now giving power to restrain and mortify the flesh in us.

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### THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

Lord, to be with Thee in Thine own abode,  
 The place prepared where Thou wilt have us dwell;  
 Brought home unto Thy Father and Thy God,  
 Where harpers harping shall Thy triumphs tell.  
 Sons of His love! heirs of His festal joy!  
 What bliss! how full, how pure, without alloy!

To gaze around in that effulgent light,  
 With not a mist from earth to intervene,  
 Thy majesty, Thy beauty, full in sight,  
 Thy glory flooding all the boundless scene.  
 Thy love in its perfection, known at last,  
 'Twill solve the long enigma of the past.

To read in full the story of the Cross—  
 Known dimly—but with growing wonder now;  
 To measure, by God's glory, what it cost,  
 Beneath His curse, Thy holy head to bow.  
 Thy royal garments (in that hour laid by),  
 Proving the depths of Thy descent—to DIE!

To hear Thee leading, in our midst, high praise  
 To Him whom Thou hast glorified on earth,  
 Whose will, the rule of all Thy pilgrim days,  
 Made Thee a sorrowing stranger from Thy birth.  
 Proof—Thou, the slain one—highest heavens above,  
 Of sovereign mercy and victorious love.

To know how thou hast made an end of sin,  
 Swept every hostile element away;  
 To see eternal righteousness brought in,  
 And watch the universe Thy mind obey.  
 No longer to perceive and know in part,  
 But feel with Thee—behold Thee whom Thou art.

To worship Him who sitteth on the throne,  
 Whose bride are we, the purchased of Thy blood;  
 Thine incorruptibility our own,  
 The dearest purpose of Thy heart made good.  
 And through eternity's exhaustless days,  
 Our Lord, our Saviour! to sound forth Thy praise!

“THE VOCATION WHEREWITH YE ARE CALLED.”

EPHESIANS II., AND IV. 1-16.

I HAVE read these portions of Scripture with a desire to speak specially on the opening verses of chapter iv. What you find there is the calling of a Christian, not as an individual merely, but as a member of the body of Christ, in his corporate place and responsibility. There are two things in Scripture—the individual calling of the Christian, and his corporate responsibility. In Hebrews you have the one, “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;” and in Ephesians the other, “Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called.” What I desire to do first, is to trace a little the line of truth which leads us up to this chapter and its exhortations, that we may see what the calling is, of which we are exhorted to walk worthy. How can we walk worthy of a calling until we know what it is?

The Epistles to the Ephesians and Romans begin at exactly opposite ends of the truth of God. In the opening of Romans you find man totally ruined, in a state of corruption; and we learn how he is to be brought out of that state and presented to God in Christ. Romans begins at man’s end, but Ephesians begins at God’s end, and shows what God is to man, dead in sins. In Romans he is alive in sins; in Ephesians dead in sins. In Romans it is how a living sinner is to be taken out of his old place, and brought out into a totally new place. In Ephesians he shows how the cross of Christ had cleared everything away. God’s love is like a river with a dam in it. God’s love was pent up, so to say. Then Christ came, and on His Cross removed the barrier, and let out the love. That is what the cross was from God’s side. Sin was the barrier, and God’s Son comes and breaks down the barrier, and God’s love can flow out.

The first place you find Christ mentioned doctrinally in this Scripture is where He is dead (chap. i. 19-20), “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” God had been testing man for four thousand years to see if he was a recoverable sinner. But every trial proved he was the more hopelessly irrecoverable. Then Christ enters the place of judgment and sin-bearing—bears it; and God

raises Him from the dead. When God made the world, it was not said of creation that it was the "exceeding greatness of his power." It was merely the fiat of God as Creator. "He spake, and it was done." Here it is the energy of the force of God's might put forth to raise Christ from the dead. Christ is looked upon as man here. He is God too, but as man God raised Him. Now why is this? Because Christ went down under judgment, and bore the wrath of God on account of sin. Because Christ was clearing the whole scene from God's side, that the unhindered heart of God may come out in all its living fulness, and take a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, and carry him up to the highest place in Christ in the glory. God's love is thus set free; Christ rises from the dead, having accomplished redemption.

You will find that people often make a mistake about redemption. They find out they are saved, and they attach redemption and salvation to the moment when they believed. But the thing that your eyes have opened upon, perhaps, yesterday, was accomplished more than 1800 years ago. When there was no such person as you existing, God entered into judgment with His Son, who made propitiation for sin, He has dealt first with Christ for sin, before He has dealt with your conscience for it. Redemption is this—it is where God begins with us by putting us on a new landing.

Supposing I am addressing a sinner. What do you require in order to stand before God? You want to be cleansed from the sins you have committed; but, also, you want to be taken out of the very place and nature in which you committed the sins, and put into another. God has dealt with the whole thing. He has taken me out of the place of a child of Adam, and made me a child of God. He came and stripped the bad tree of its fruit; but He has dealt with the tree also in His Son. Redemption has been accomplished. It is in Christ. Take your true place as a sinner and you'll get it. The moment you take a ruined place God can meet you.

After Christ had borne the judgment of the cross, and risen out of the grave, He preaches peace. (Jno. xx.) He first went down into judgment and left it behind. He has come out on the platform of resurrection, and I have come out with Him. The whole thing that stood against you has been cleared away, and you can look up into God's face without a cloud between. There is an evil nature within

me to contend with, but it is “not I.” The same power precisely that wrought in Christ is put forth to quicken us. Christ not merely died on the cross for sin, but God has raised Him from the dead, and carried Him right up into the glory. Then the Holy Ghost is sent down, and we are quickened together with Him—raised up together, *i.e.*, Jew and Gentile, and seated in Him in heavenly places. Then you get Christian consciousness. What is that? Jno. xiv. 20, tells you, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” How do you know you are in Christ and Christ in you? Because Christ said you would when He would send the Holy Ghost!

A Christian may either look upon himself as united to Christ, and seated in the heavenly places, and “possessing all things;” or in the wilderness, “as having nothing” but the Holy Ghost. If you look at yourself, you are not in heavenly places at all.

We think it a great thing to be blessed through Christ, but it is a great deal more to be blessed *with* Him. (Ch. ii. 7.) “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” God is going to shew out to the universe that He is very *rich*. He is going to shew out how He is rich to poor outcasts such as we are, and to the thief, the woman of the city who was a sinner. He will place them in the same glory with His Son.

There is no thought of justification in the Ephesians. It is a *new* creation here, and God has nothing to justify. We are “created in Christ Jesus.” In ch. ii. 11, 12, he calls to mind what they were. “Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.” In v. 13, we “are made nigh by the blood of Christ,” and in v. 14, “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition.” Why is peace solid? Because Christ made it. Now we get the body of Christ formed on the breaking down of the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. The essence of Judaism was to keep up the wall of partition. The essence of Christianity is that it is broken down. God

broke it down (v. 16), "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;" the one who put it there broke it down. Now we come to both having "access by one Spirit unto the Father." In v. 18 we get the Trinity, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Now mark the steps by which He has been leading us from "dead in sins," to "access to the Father." Can you go any higher? No. Then he says, "I am going to drop you down into your responsibility." He first establishes our standing. Don't try to enjoy the standing and evade the responsibility. You can't do it. You may try to evade it, and get a bad conscience, but you can't separate the two things.

Christian responsibility is founded on relationship. You are in the relationship, now walk worthy of it. You can't be a naughty child until you are a child; but it is a shame when we are so. The relationship must exist or I can't know it. Then I must know it to walk in it. How can you walk as a child of God until you are one? You may call God your Father in a general way, and not be a child. Thousands are going to ruin with a lie in their right hand thus.

Then again doubting and uncertainty for a child of God are not Christianity. It is in your heart, and when you are hearkening to a doubt you are hearkening to the old man. Very well then, I refuse a doubt because it is of the old man. The more complete my ruin, the more full His mercy. The prodigal can take no place but what the Father gives him. If you want your own place, be shut out! God can't give you a better one than He has given you.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." These are the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, let me press; ch. iii. 5, proves it. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

This mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. iii. 9,) was "*hid in God.*" Satan thought he had achieved a wonderful victory in driving Christ's body out of the earth. Not a bit of a victory. He sends down the Holy Ghost to constitute and maintain Christ's body here, and Satan has no victory.

The Church stands in complete redemption, as Christ's body. The apostles and prophets were doctrinally the foundation of the Church, but Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is personally the foundation. The building groweth unto an holy temple. But as to her present condition we read, “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” If that be the Church, where is it now? There is not a sign of it. You may see it, like everything else committed to man, totally spoilt. Wood, hay, and stubble come in, and spoils it all, but Christ will make it all good in Himself by and bye. If the Church is not to His glory, He will come by and bye to be glorified in His saints.

Adam was not God's counselled man at all. The second Adam is. Christ is God's purposed man, and all His purposes come out in Him.

I pass over chapter iii., which is a parenthesis, with one remark, that not only is the Church a habitation of God, but you will find that v. 6 speaks of it as “one body.” The Spirit of God comes and dwells in every believer here on earth, constituting them “one body,” and united to Christ. The difference between the house or habitation of God and the body is this—I live in the house, but the house is not “me.” Now on these two thoughts Paul finds his exhortation in chapter iv. What is the calling of which I am to walk worthy? Is it individual merely? No, that is in Hebrews and other scripture. Here, it is that the Church is Christ's body and the habitation of God, and I am to walk worthy of this. The word “calling” is the same as “vocation.” Lowliness and meekness will ever be the characteristic of those who are walking in God's presence. You can't bring self to heaven, and you ought to allow nothing in your walk that you can't take to heaven with you. Many a Christian tries to carry a burden on their backs which they can't take into the Father's house. Better leave it behind you now. “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond (this is the word) of peace.” There are hundreds of bodies formed by man. God has constituted one body by the Holy Ghost here on earth; and my responsibility is to endeavour to keep that unity. But if you look around, you see Christ's members all scattered. What am I to do if I can't set the Church to rights? Begin at home—set myself to rights, and walk with Christ. People have endeavoured

to attach Christ to unity; it is the popular thing. Man makes unions, and attaches Christ's name to them, and consequently endorses all manner of self-will and wickedness; but if you want the "unity of the Spirit" you must attach it, as Scripture does, to Christ, and then it should have every blessed quality of Christ—holiness, and grace, and truth. You have not to make it. It is made. You have to keep it. It is constituted by the Holy Ghost on earth. Are you endeavouring to keep it, in "one body," with those who are in the path before you?

You know that verse in 2 Cor. xiii., "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Few know what it means, though it is used as a formulary. At Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down and constituted the Church, all three went together. Everybody knew then the grace of Christ; the love of God; and walked in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. Now, every converted person knows the grace of Christ; but all don't know and enjoy the love of God: many like to have Christ between them and God. You will find them fewer who know it than those who know the grace of Christ. Then, again, how very few indeed are walking in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. It is in this fellowship I am bound to walk. It is a plain pathway; one as clear as a sunbeam amidst the hundreds of sects of the professing Church, if I have a single eye! One that contemplates in its breadth the whole Church of God, even if they will not walk with me there.

Now we get (v. 8, &c.) diversity of gifts, which Christ gives as an ascended Lord to the Church. Now, let me ask you (v. 9, 10) what sort of a Christ you have? I have a Christ who was down in the lower parts of the earth. A Christ who has filled from the lowest parts of the earth up to the highest heavens—as a Man. There is not a spot that He has not filled. He is my life. He has not merely put away my sins, but is become my life.

This endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit keeps me in company with the Lord, by one Spirit, in one body. If I have to separate from others who will not walk in this path, I am "endeavouring" to do so even towards those who will not walk with me. I am observing the unity of the Spirit towards them, though without them.

If we turn to Jeremiah's day, we find him as God's man

in the ruin of everything, when Jerusalem was going to be given up to the Gentiles. His pathway there has an analogy to ours. If you want to find the divine clue in the labyrinth around you, it is as plain as a sunbeam to every *single* eye. Are you down here *for God* in the scene around you? If so, God will be *for you*. He is always faithful to every faithful soul. Depend upon Him for it. God was for Daniel when Daniel was for God. He never forsakes the true soul.

Jeremiah stands in the close of his nation's history—for forty years his ministry had continued, and that ministry scarcely left a trace behind it in the dark day of Israel's apostacy. He began in the bright day of revival in Josiah's passover, and he went a downward course—down into Egypt—until at last he pronounces the final words, “My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah.” (xliv. 26). Christ's path was a downward one to the cross. Are you prepared for a downward course? Jeremiah had a heart for the work and a heart for the Lord. He weeps for them when they will not hear the word (xiii. 17). That was a heart that could work for the Lord and not for an object down here. If you are working for an object here, you'll break your heart. If you are working for Christ and His glory, you will never be disappointed. Oh! I want to press upon you to be *for God* down here—to be *God's* men and women in this scene; standing for God, so that He may find you in that posture, that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

See ch. xv. 16-21. Jeremiah sits alone, for the Word of God had separated him. He finds God's word, and eats it—digests it, and he sits alone. Then the answer of God comes to him: You must “separate the precious from the vile.” If you do, “you shall be as my mouth.” “Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.” That is what people don't like. They would have the union of Christians, but that will not do for God. It must be in the unity of the Spirit, or it will not be gathering with Christ, but scattering. “I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall”—a citadel of strength for the heart that walks with God.

Now, if you turn to 2 Timothy you will find the same principle. You find that the beautiful thing that Paul had laboured for was all gone to decay, and yet he could take up the second epistle of Timothy and show them a pathway through it all. “All they which are in Asia be turned away

from me." They have given up that beautiful thing which I taught them, and in the very place where I taught it to them—at Ephesus. And it is a patent fact that the doctrine of the Church of God, as he taught it, was all practically lost when Paul left this scene.

Then the midnight cry came, and it found the whole church asleep—wise and foolish. Christ never gives more than one cry—at midnight. It is never repeated. And now we are in that peculiar place, when the midnight cry has gone forth. The wise virgins were very calm and quiet, trimming their lamps. The foolish virgins were all in confusion. Is there anything in your hearts and ways that you would not like Christ to find if He came within half an hour? That is the test. We are in that remarkable place after the cry has gone forth, in the confusion which followed that midnight cry.

Can you conceive anything more blessed than the grace of Christ, in restoring to us what has been buried in the dust of centuries—giving it all back again, when we had given it up. Giving back to us the doctrine of the church of God, when it had lain dormant for 1800 years.

Now Paul comes to what the believer is to do, (2 Tim. ii. 19, &c.,) "*Nevertheless* the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." It had not changed, though man had. Then we learn about the seal. One side of the seal marks my privilege, and the other my responsibility. In the professing church He sees every soul that belongs to Him however scattered. Now turn the other side of the seal. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Whatever is false and untrue I must leave. Iniquity means what is not true—what is false; what is not the truth of God. Is it merely negative? No. You are separating yourself to the fellowship of the Spirit of God—to be for God and with God, in the unity of the Spirit. I must walk alone if there is no one else to walk with me. At first the church ought to have purged out all the vile; but instead of separating the vile from the precious, we have now to purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonour; to separate the precious from the vile.

He is likening Christendom to "a great house"—He does not call Christendom "the great house," it is an analogy. It is always the "House of God," in its responsible place, because

the Holy Ghost has not left it, even though wood, hay, and stubble have come in. I am to depart from what is false—anything dishonouring to Christ. I don't deny that the person is a vessel; but it is a question of the glory of Christ, and being faithful to my brother. Am I to walk in his darkness, or try to lead him into the light? If I do this, I shall be prepared—furnished unto every good work (ch. ii. 21). “Prepared” by being separated from the falseness and confusion around. “Furnished” by the Word of God (ch. iii. 17).

Verse 22. “Flee also youthful lusts.” Here I get personal holiness. Then, “Follow righteousness, &c., with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here I get my company. You never can get the thing put to rights again. Then you must set yourself to rights, and walk with those who are seeking to walk aright, and I am responsible to God to do so.

Is there anything more simple? You will find this path if you have a single eye; not the most simple Christian who need not be full of light. If you have a single eye you will soon know God's will. If you are doubting what the will of the Lord is, it shews that your eye is not single.

The Lord press His truth on your hearts, and give them to answer with alacrity to those blessed privileges of Christ's body, so that you may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, and with lowliness and meekness endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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## NOTES ON JOHN XVII.

I NOTICE first in this chapter, that there is responsibility, but of an entirely new order; a responsibility which is connected with Christ, and which He has discharged; “I have glorified thee on the earth,” “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” A responsibility which in righteousness towards God, and in grace to us, has put us into the same place as Himself. The Word has come down to us; and words have been brought, and we have believed them, and have known surely, as Jesus said, “that I came out from God.”

If we think of what was previously given by Moses—the Law; it was but the measure of man, come down to the

earth, and which claimed from man what he ought to be. A perfect rule for man. It was connected necessarily with responsibility, but the responsibility of the creature, and in which he failed; God was hidden behind it—He not coming to man, nor man to Him. But under it he fails. Then because of this break down, "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," but came in when this need was thus made plain. Man failed in Paradise, and failed out of Paradise. He failed upon the question of righteousness by law; and rejected Christ come in grace. If we look at Jew or Gentile, we see Christ taking up *this* responsibility too before God, and putting away sin for us, by the sacrifice of Himself. He dies and closes up the whole scene in which that responsibility was. All is summed up in the words of Jesus, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Another thing is stated in this chapter, "I have glorified thee on the earth." He came into the world not only as a man, but as the heir of promises; and they rejected Him in whom these promises were, as the promised seed. But He has secured the *promises* by the cross; and also laid the foundation for all the purposes of God in His death and resurrection. He who came with all the promises of God in His hand, was rejected and killed. Salvation on God's part is the answer to this wickedness on man's. It was not merely that man was a sinner, but all that God would do for a sinner was refused—"Last of all he sent his Son." My soul and conscience are cleared by the very blood which was the proof of my sin and guilt. The purpose which was before the world can now be brought out, for righteousness has come in, and Christ as man has got a place in the glory of God, because He deserves it! This is the righteous foundation of the purposes of God; and He is there too in a work done for us.

In this ascended Lord we see the power of a life which has triumphed over death, and all the testimony that now comes to us comes from thence. The Son is there, and there as a man in righteousness, according to God's own nature. But God is not merely glorified in righteousness; but the Father in love! "Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self." The Father's name is the spring of eternal life to us in the Son; and the Son as man has brought it in, and we have received it. It is not now what Jehovah had given to the Messiah, but what the Father has given to the

Son. "These things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." He has given the words to us, that the Father gave to Him. These are the privileges that belong to us as believers.

The first three gospels present Christ to be received by man; but in John's the people are called out by grace; it begins with His rejection—and they are separated from the world, and brought into this place of possession also. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them," this is the full grace of Christ. The Father's words communicated to Christ are to bring us into every place which belongs to Christ. This is the revelation of God's heavenly thoughts through His Son, where there can be nothing of responsibility as to man, as when under law—though man is treated by the gospel as a sinner, and needing grace. Christ is the revelation of what a perfect man is, and what every thing in the world is to God. We are not of it.

When we look at Christ's person, what do we see? The Father in His Son! For it was the revelation of the Father in Christ. The disciples said *show* us the Father. The expression of the Father was the living Christ. It was a revelation in the way suited to man as he was down here; for it was seen in the man who tabernacled with us, that we might associate our hearts with the Father as His was.

"The glory thou hast given me I have given them;" again, "The love wherewith thou lovest me." Every thing which He is and has in Himself He brings us into; except, of course, what is essential to His eternal Sonship. The words, the life, the glory, the love, with all the blessedness He has, and what is not so pleasant to us, separation from the world. But it is a portion with Himself now and hereafter. Moreover He puts us in His own place of testimony to the world. He was of God in the midst of the world, and always *Himself* the revelation of God. And this is what a Christian is likewise.

"Sanctify them through thy truth." The word of God comes down (not like the law) and brings *to my heart* the measure and character of what Christ *is*. The truth, His word, which tells what God is, tells me what I ought to be as a child of the Father. Till *God* is revealed, how can I tell what I ought to be—but grace and truth tell *me* what the Father is—what the world is: this is Cain's city. What is the telegraph to a man when he is going out of the world by

death? But there is something more—"for their sakes I sanctify myself." Not simply a word come down, but a man gone up! Now I get where righteousness takes us entirely separated from sinners, and gone into the place where my affections are fixed on Him. He is the model man in glory, and I must purify myself by the hope of being with Him, as He is pure. The work is perfectly accomplished which makes me meet for the same place. The Holy Ghost takes these things and shows them to us. God hath revealed them to us by the Spirit, according to the purpose of God up there. The truth comes down through the rent veil to us, but I get the glory of the man gone up, and who for our sakes has sanctified Himself.

Another thing is, we should think of His glory and happiness. He expects us to be interested in Him; "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I go unto the Father." So entirely are we one with Him, and He one with us. He brings the love of God, wherewith He is loved, into the heart. The Christian is made up from this Christ. The eye that is upon Him sees God's path even through this world. The responsible man has failed, but the man of purpose was in love and grace below, and is now in righteousness and glory above.

The difficulty is to get a path through the world when all is wrong, and I have got it—got it in Christ. He has met and cleared the sins, and we have put off the old man, and got into the place of the second man, in perfect acceptance with God.

Our responsibility now is to manifest Him in our mortal body. "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," was His character, and this is ours. We shall find our short-comings, no doubt; but perfect grace has given us a place with Christ every where, and this must be held in spite of all failure. In truth it is the recovering power of grace. The Lord gives us to believe in His love—that He has "sanctified Himself for our sakes;" and He expects our hearts to meet and answer His own—blessed place and portion. He sees in us morally, even now, the fruit of the travail of His soul!

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#### FRAGMENT.

GOD is now making Christians, christian; and letting the devil make the world, the world!

“A NEW MEAT OFFERING.”

ROMANS xv. and xvi.

THERE are two ministries in this chapter, that in the 8th verse was a ministry to the circumcision, in the person of Jesus Christ “for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that *the Gentiles* might glorify God for His mercy.”

This ministry was rejected by the Jews when Jesus and His disciples preached the kingdom, and presented it in His own *person*. The verses 9 to 12 are descriptive of God’s *earthly order of blessing*, and are consequently suspended by the nation’s unbelief, but will be reintroduced and set up in millennial blessing, when the Messiah comes again, and “the people shall be *willing* in the day of *his power*.”

Whilst this ministry is in abeyance, the 16th verse describes *another*, which is set up by the Lord in heaven, and introduced by Paul, “that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the *Holy Ghost*.” This is the present action of God, “calling out *from* the Gentiles, a people for his name,”—and this company takes the place on earth, as suited to a *rejected* Christ in heaven. “They are not of the world, even *as I* am not of the world.” However, the apostle of the Gentiles offers them up in his priestly order, as Moses and Aaron presented the Levites for Israel in former days; but with this further and remarkable difference, “being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” A *new* offering to God, fruit of Christ’s work, and of God’s sovereignty in electing love toward us, while Israel is broken off because of unbelief. Further, *our* apostle declares, “I have therefore whereof I may glory through Jesus Christ in those things which *pertain to God*, for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath *not* wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders by *the power of the Spirit of God*.”

Chapter xvi. is properly a postscript to the epistle, and recognises not merely the *new* offering up of the Gentiles, “sanctified by the Holy Ghost,” but consistently therewith, knows “*no one* after the flesh.” We therefore find an entirely new genealogy for the people who compose *this offering up*,

and another mode of salutation, suited to "*new creatures in CHRIST.*" "Salute Andronicus and Junia my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were *in Christ* before me."

"Salute Rufus *chosen in the Lord*—salute the beloved Persis which laboured much *in the Lord*. Greet them which be of the household of Narcissus, which *are in the Lord.*"

Take another form of connection which recognises these not only as *in Christ*, but in *Church connexion*.

"I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of *the church* which is at Cenchrea; that ye *receive her in the Lord.*" "Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers *in Christ Jesus*, who have for my life laid down their own necks, likewise greet the *church* which is in their house.

Lastly, as regards *labour*, salute Tryphena and Tryphoas, who *labour in the Lord*. Salute the beloved Persis, *which laboured MUCH in the Lord.*

The Jews *could* rightly boast of descent, and had whereof to glory, as their genealogy proves "of whom as concerning **THE FLESH** *Christ came,*"—but we Gentiles date our genealogy from the end of man in the flesh, and refuse to know a Christ after this order. *We* begin when descent and succession have no place nor register. "The offering up of the Gentiles" *is one* with a risen Christ and Lord. We date at a new starting point, the Man in glory, at the right hand of God, "where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free, but Christ is all and in all." "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" We may well say, who are *sanctified* by the Holy Ghost on earth, and one with a risen glorified Christ in heaven. May we remember our new elevation, and walk worthy of it, as "the epistle of Christ," known and read of all men.

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#### FRAGMENT.

God could not be said to be "the truth," because He is not the expression of some other thing, it is God become a man—it is Christ who is the "the truth," and the measure of all things!

## THOUGHTS ON REDEMPTION, AND THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

### HEB. II.

WE have a wonderful enquiry in the sixth verse of Hebrews ii., which is quoted from Psalm viii. This question is—“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” It is an enquiry founded on his nothingness in himself looked at as a fallen creature down here, but in the answer in our chapter bringing out all the counsels of God in Christ.

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” Such is his littleness in himself; but when the inquiry is answered, to what he is in the counsels and purposes of God in Christ, and not according to what man is in himself, we find Him to be One, in whom all the wisdom and power of God are displayed. This brings out all that God is. In creation the power of God as Creator is manifested, but in Christ there is more than power—the goodness and love of God are displayed. All those qualities of God wherein His nature comes out, which are more than attributes.

Power, for instance, can say the word, and the thing is done. All very wonderful, no doubt, but there is a great deal more than that in God's counsels in Christ. In Him the angels learn what God is in His ways and counsels, for the word that spoke everything into existence has become a Man! He who created angels, did not take up angels, He took up man. In their creation the power of God is displayed, but the ways and qualities (I use that word to make a distinction from mere attributes of power and the like,) of what He is in holiness, love, goodness—all these qualities of God's nature come out in His counsels and ways in Christ. The creation of the angels does not bring out His love nor His ways in grace. They learn these in their God become a man. “For, verily, he took not on him angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” That is, He who created angels, did not take up angels, He took up man. He is about to display everything in man. “Thou hast crowned him with glory and honour,” but all in man as associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is this which gives man such a wonderful place.

And then with man, it is not like the angels, glorious creatures, who are preserved by God's power, unfallen, and they show His ways of power and goodness in this respect. His power to do it, for no creature can stand in itself, but men are taken up, when they are sinners, to display the glory of God in them in goodness and mercy, in all these qualities that are in the highest sense the full revelation of what God is. This does not come out in the angels. They don't want mercy as we do, though no doubt in a certain way as poor weak creatures in themselves they are preserved by God's mercy, for no creature can stand without being sustained by God; but they don't want mercy in redemption as we do. But all that God is in grace, in mercy, in love, in redemption; and the unfolding of righteousness when all has been called in question by sin, all that comes out in man—"which things the angels desire to look into." As Paul says, "we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," (1 Cor. iv. 9) in carrying this out.

This testimony as to what man is in Christ, comes after all is lost in the first Adam. He was set up in responsibility as the image of God, which is never said of angels; but in man, when fallen, when afar off, I see grace and power coming to men, and connecting them with the Creator, so that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." That is what is brought out so wonderfully by this question, "What is man?"

Looking at what man is in the world, he is a poor, wretched, fallen creature less than a worm in himself, "whose foundation is in the dust," as Job says, "which are crushed before the moth;" (Job iv. 19), nothing but weakness and sin; but the moment you bring in the thoughts and counsels of God about him in Christ, that puts man in a wonderful place. Angels excel us no doubt in glory and strength, but it is never said of them that they were set in the image of God. There never was any being set up to be the centre of an immense system that was to turn round himself, as Adam was. He was made in the image of God, a figure of Christ, "of him who was to come." (Rom. v. 14.) God set him over all the works of His hands.

Adam fell we know, and the whole system fell with him, and as the result of this we see now every man is seeking to be a centre for himself, the sad consequences of man losing his place. We see on every side the whole system is

under the bondage of corruption "made subject to vanity," as the apostle says; but man was set in this place, and in the Lord Jesus Christ he has been set there again for ever. In the Lord Jesus Christ man will be the centre of everything God has created. "He hath put all things in subjection under his feet." I do not speak of the wicked, of those who reject Him now, who will be cast into the lake of fire. "Thou didst set him over the work of thy hands. 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." In I Cor. xv. 27, this comes out even more strongly, the exception makes it stronger. "It is manifested he is excepted, which did put all things under him." It is Christ as Man that is before us in the passage, and the only exception being that of God, who put all things under His feet, establishes the subjection of all things to man in the person of Christ in the most absolute way.

But, then, in Christ we have all this lordship and dominion in a Redeemer—in one who keeps it safe. In one who did not take this place until He had "descended first into the lower parts of the earth"—to death; and He descends to death, that He might ascend up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things; and that He might fill all things in the power of the redemption He has wrought out. He had a personal title to go there without descending first into death—as He said to Peter, when the Jews came to take Him, "thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." He could have taken the place of dominion, "for all things were created by him, and for him;" but, "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." He does not take them until He takes them as man consequent on redemption, for unless He died he would have had no joint-heirs.

We come in thus, for it is of the grace of God He has tasted death, that He might be the "first-born among many brethren." We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. "The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one."

"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." He thus takes us up, and brings us

into the glory, bringing us in every respect into the relationship in which He stands Himself as man, and making His standing as Son Himself, ours, for He makes us sons, and He took this place as man, though ever the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, that it might be made ours. As He says to Mary, after His resurrection, when redemption is accomplished, "Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God."

But now we come to another thing. How could He take men into His place, for they are sinners? He could not take them there as such; so He comes down to the sinners where they are, and puts Himself, sinless of course, into their place. It is thus I learn where I am. "If one died for all, then were all dead." We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. He came down to the place of death and judgment, passing through all the toil and difficulties, temptations and trials of this world as we do, but perfect in all, that He might take up our hearts where He is; giving us a title by redemption, and a condition by grace, in which we could be associated with Him as the first-born among many brethren.

It is not merely the fact that I am saved, that is true; but He has taken up our case so thoroughly down here, that He might take up our hearts there by the love that He has brought down into them, up into the very place where He is gone, making us know that the Father loves us, as He loved Him. That is the word in John xvii., "And that the world may know that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." It is not only that I have a place in glory, in consequence of redemption; but Christ has come for this purpose, to associate us so completely in heart, and spirit, and mind with Himself, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He might well be ashamed if He took us up as we are, without redemption.

You see the various details of the way He took up this path, and how God brought Him through, in other scriptures; but in John xiii., where the end of that path, death is immediately before His spirit, He says, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and

shall straightway glorify him." God was indeed always glorified in Him, but He is speaking there of His death, when He was made sin for us, and bore our sins. He was perfect under it all, so that as Man He never so glorified God as when forsaken of God on the cross. He was in Himself a sweet savour to God, besides His putting away our sins. In His death He was perfect in obedience, perfect in love, perfect in act, when everything in Him was being perfectly tested. Therefore, God glorified Him with Himself, and crowned Him with glory and honour.

He gives us in this chapter the various reasons upon which He had to go through all this path of sorrow, in order that we might have the blessing with Him.

The ground next mentioned is in the following verse: "For it became Him" (that is God), "for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." God is going to bring many sons to glory. What a wonderful place for man! We get the great original truth upon which all this is founded in Proverbs viii. The link between God and man is found there in the delight of the Eternal Son of God in the sons of men. He is spoken of in Prov. viii. as the wisdom of God. We see Him there before creation as God's eternal delight. He is thus revealed in the counsels of God. "I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." There I get the link formed with the eternal object of the Father's delight; but where did His delight go out? "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." It is in the habitable parts of the earth, before ever they were made. "I was by him as one brought up by him, rejoicing always before him." And if He looked downwards, as it were, He found the objects of His delight in the sons of men. Well, and He became a Man—that is the source and foundation of it all to us. "For verily he took not on him angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham"—those who are the heirs of faith. Then you get the purpose and place in Ep. i. 10, "That he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are on earth; even in him"—putting all things under His hand as man. The ground given for this in Hebrews i, is His person; He is the Son of God; and in Col. i, because as Creator, all things were made by Him and for Him; and then because He is the answer to "what is man?" according to

Ps. viii., whom God has set over the works of His hands. 1 Cor. xv. shows that He will take this place of dominion in resurrection—first His own and then that of His people—after He has destroyed death. Thus we see that His title to this place of universal Headship is His being God's Son—His being the Creator of all things—and because He is Man, the centre of God's counsels and plans. As He says here, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visited him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For that he put all in subjection under him;" that is, where the purpose and intention of God put Him.

But we now come to another thing, "We see not yet all things put under him." Half the Psalm is fulfilled. "He is crowned with glory and honour," but all things are not yet put under Him, though it is all known now to faith. Why is this? Because He is waiting for the joint-heirs. He is not destroying His enemies, but gathering His friends by the gospel, that he may take His power and reign with them. As Paul says, "I would to God that ye did reign, that we might reign with you." That is, he wished that the time was come for Christ to reign, according to another set of promises in Ps. ii., which belong to Him as reigning over this earth. He is there set by God as His king in Zion, and He is to ask Jehovah, and He will give Him "the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession." That is, "the world to come," which is spoken of in Heb. ii.

But it is not the highest thing that will belong to Him in the world to come. The promises are connected with His title as in Ps. ii., Messiah, and king of Israel, and therefore the Psalm speaks of His rejection. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The very passage Peter quotes in the Acts, ch. iv., and applies to Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the Jews, in crucifying Christ. But, having been rejected, the promises in Ps. ii. are suspended for the time. The throne of David has passed away, and He takes another place. He has a seat on the Father's throne. He will have the throne of David, though it is not the highest thing, but being rejected He takes another place, and sits on the Father's throne where He now is. He is not upon His

own throne yet, but, as He says, "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) He sits, a man at the right hand of God, sitting on His Father's throne; but He could not take His seat on His own throne until all the joint-heirs are ready; for He will have them reign with Him. It is there where Ps. viii. comes in. Nathaniel (John i.) owns Him, according to Ps. ii., as the "Son of God and king of Israel." Son of God as born into the world; but the Lord tells him he shall see greater things than these. "Henceforth," for that is the word, "ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man." It is a small thing my title in Israel. You shall see Ps. viii. fulfilled also.

But He was rejected and cast out of the world, that God's righteousness might be accomplished in putting away our sins, and according to the value and virtue of what He has done. God's righteousness is declared in setting Him as Man, at His right hand, according to Ps. cx., "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." As yet He is expecting. He is not destroying His enemies yet, but He is gathering out his friends. We must therefore suffer with Him till He does take this place of power. His enemies are not yet made His footstool. The world is around us, and Satan is not yet bound, and we see everything spoiled that God set up good, and we must expect it to be so, until He takes His great power and reigns, and then we shall also reign with Him. He is now sitting on His Father's throne, with title over everything, not only as Creator, but by redemption, having first descended into the lower parts of the earth, but yet having taken nothing; His enemies still in power, and soon to rise up in more dreadful opposition than ever; and then all will be put down.

Now here is the folly not only of people generally, but even of Christians in so deceiving themselves as to set about improving man, and seeking to set up the first Adam again. They are going to get all right, and improve the world, and even Christians think they can improve the world—the thing Christ did not do. Are they wiser than He? The world crucified Him, and they fancy they can make the world all right.

Which is it with you, beloved friends, will you seek to improve the world which has rejected Christ? or will you be now Christ's companions in it, associate with Him, as the brethren of whom He is not ashamed? Christ is gathering His people out of the world now, and judgment is coming upon it. They are His companions, His associates, His brethren, and as the Captain of their salvation, He is bringing them to glory. The world is given up to judgment. I don't deny that the light of Christianity has improved the world in one sense. It has checked the evil appearing. People are ashamed to do in the light what they do in the dark, but that is all. They are in themselves the same; man is no better. We find this blessed One, who is to be the centre of all things, upon the throne of God, but we see not yet all things put under Him, but we see Him crowned with glory and honour.

The next point taken up here is the way in which He was bringing others into full association of heart with Himself. All the glory was His, but He does not go and take His place at the right hand of God until He has accomplished redemption, until He has tasted death—gone down to the lowest condition to which man can go down. He is speaking here of sufferings rather than atonement; we shall come to that lower down in the chapter. But He took these sufferings by the grace of God. It was the grace of God which brought Him into this place, and by which He tasted death, which is that part of His path where He went down to the lowest. "By the grace of God he tasted death for every man." His whole path was one of suffering. We have the *fact* of His tasting death as the end of that path, not its value. It is looked at here as His going down to that place where all the consequences of the ruin of the first man were expressed; to the place wherein the curse was pronounced on Adam, and He goes through it by the grace of God. A blessed testimony to the way in which He takes up man. He came from the Father into the world, and again He leaves the world to go to the Father, and He goes back by death, where we were. It is presented here as the road He took. He did not go back with twelve legions of angels as He might have done, but, "by the grace of God, he tasted death for every man."

It is the great general fact here, that He who created everything, and is now sitting crowned with glory and honour

at the right hand of God, did not take that place until He had gone down to the lowest condition in which man is found.

I get these two things here. *First*, the fact of His tasting death; *and, secondly*, the fact of a life spent where hatred and death reigned, and where He was rejected.

In this chapter we find Him come into this place on four accounts. He has come here for the glory of God; He has come to make propitiation for the sins of the people; He has come to destroy Satan's power; and He has come to be able to sympathize with every trial, and difficulty, and sorrow of my heart which I pass through in treading this path. The last, entering into our sorrows, is what He does as Priest—He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." (Chap. iv. 15.)

The first ground we find in the tenth verse. "It became him," that is God, "in bringing many souls to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The moment the blessed Lord takes up our cause, He must take the full consequences before God. It is not that He was not perfect in Himself. He came from God and went to God, and in all His pathway down here He was "the Son of man, who is in heaven;" but He had come to obey, to save us, and to bring us to glory also; and, if that were the case, He must take the consequences. It became God to deal with Him according to the place He had taken. If He has undertaken our cause, He must go through all that becomes the glory of God according to His majesty.

It is not the question here of God's love, or of meeting the claims of righteousness, but because He is to bring us as sons to glory. In doing this the majesty of a righteous God must be maintained. It is what becomes God, and who could vindicate that but Christ? There never could have been security for God's righteousness otherwise. "It became him . . . to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Not that He was not always perfect in Himself, but here, as throughout the epistle, perfect means the full result of a thing. Here it is the full result in bringing Him as the Captain of our salvation into the state of a glorified man, because He is to bring the sons to glory. What a wondrous place of association with Christ for men. In Himself He was ever the perfect one. He is always in the bosom of the Father. This was ever His place. Not as

people say, He was in the bosom of the Father, and left the bosom to come down here. Scripture does not speak so. The Father's bosom was ever His place, and is so still, and all that He did was ever the Father's delight,—not only in His death, but all through His course. At His baptism, before He began His ministry, He was so perfectly the object of His Father's delight, not only as His Son, but also as the perfect Man, that, if I may reverently use the expression, the Father could not be silent, but opens the heavens upon Him, and says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

But here it is the question of the majesty of God. The glory was due to Christ, but He takes it as the Captain of salvation that He may share it with the sons. We do not get the Father's name in the Hebrews; it is the question of our coming to God. And so if He take up these sinners, He must go through the consequences of having taken them up. God's glory must be maintained. If He has to clear us from our sins, He must deal with God about them, and be made sin—He must die. It was His own blessed grace to do it, but here it is looked at as meeting the claims of God's majesty. So He by the eternal Spirit offers Himself without spot to God. It is not spoken of here as clearing us, but as called for by God's glory; and the more we look at the cross, the more we shall see God could not be glorified in any other way. Nothing brings God out like the cross. If there had been no cross, God could have destroyed the whole race of men as an act of righteousness, but there would have been no love in that; and had He forgiven sinners without the cross, then there would have been no righteousness; but the moment Christ gives Himself up for the glory of God, then I get perfect dealing with the sin in righteousness, and perfect dealing with the sinner in love. Therefore one can say, there is nothing like the cross, of course all that the cross brings out was always in God's nature, only the cross displays it, and it cannot be known anywhere else, so that there is nothing like the cross. Nobody could be in the glory with Christ without it.

In the cross we get expressed all that God is, every character of His, and Christ giving Himself up in perfect love to His Father and for us, and in perfect obedience to God. Here it is not so much the question of God's love, or of His righteousness, but of what became Him according to

His majesty. It was for the glory of God that Christ should pass through all these sufferings, as He had undertaken our cause. His whole life we know was suffering—He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but here He is seen perfect at the end. He goes through in death the whole effect and consequences of having taken up our cause for God's glory, so that He should say, John xvii. 4, 5, "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."

Therefore this is His place now with the Father as a glorified Man. When He comes again, He will be displayed in glory, and the world will see His glory. He will come in His Father's glory, in His own glory, and in the glory of the holy angels; but faith sees it now, and sees it too in the most excellent way, not as it will be displayed in judgment, but when in grace where one feels at home. "Glorify thou me with own self." It is His glory in the Father's house, and only faith sees that.

As He glorified God perfectly on the cross, so He has gone as Man into the glory of God. But then it became God to deal with Him in this way, if He is bringing us as sons to glory. What a thought it gives of the depth of that place Christ was in, that in the place of sin, and made sin and among sinners, He was making good the glory of God,—this is the first ground.

We come now to the perfect identification between Christ and the sanctified.\* "For both he that sanctified, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee; and again, I will put my trust in him; and again, Behold, I and the children, which God hath given me." (verses 11, 12, 13.) Here we get the association of these sanctified ones with Himself. He the Sanctifier and they the sanctified, and they are all of one. It is through incarnation, but only said in resurrection, after redemption. It is after death, after He has been heard from the horns of the unicorns—after He has accomplished redemption, that He

\* It is not the oneness of the body here, but our individual oneness and association with Christ.

declared His Father's name to His brethren. In a vague way He said, "Whosoever doeth the will of God, the same is my mother, and sister, and brother;" but He never called His disciples His brethren before the cross. This is most important to be clear upon, for these verses have been perverted by men to establish the doctrine of union in incarnation before redemption was accomplished. But now He has accomplished redemption. He calls them expressly His brethren, saying, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." (John xx. 17.) The association is only with sanctified ones after redemption was accomplished. But they are now looked on as all one set; a risen Christ and those redeemed are all of one, one set before God.

True, in themselves they are conscious that they have the treasure in poor earthen vessels, conscious of frailty and infirmity, and poor weak bodies; yet these sanctified ones are all one set before God. They are Christ's brethren, and they are entirely and for ever associated with Himself. They the redeemed, and He the Redeemer; they the sanctified ones, and He the Sanctifier; they the recipients of grace, and He the Exerciser of the grace; but still all one set before God. The more you look into it, the more striking does this association, this oneness appear. What a place this gives man with God, for it is God here and not the Father.

All through the life of Christ, He does not once say "My God." It was always "My Father," for He lived in the perfect communion of the relationship He was in to the Father, as His only begotten Son; but when He was on the cross drinking the cup of wrath for us, He says, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" for that was not the expression of His relationship to His Father, but of infinite suffering, and of infinite faith. But when that was accomplished, so that we would be brought in, He uses both names, and on these names of God and Father all our blessings rest.

If we now look to God, as He is, a God of infinite holiness, we can delight in that name, for we are made partakers of His holiness. I can look to God and say "my God:" because I am in Christ before Him in righteousness, according to all that He is, so that I am suited to it.

Can you look at God in His infinite holiness, and say, all is well, and joy in Him thus, delighting in His holiness, as

one who has Christ's place and relationship with God? Besides, as the Son of the Father, He gives me the blessed relationship of a son, so that I can say, He is my Father too. Therefore, you read in the epistles, that He is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Christ is a Man, and so He is His God, and because He is His Son, God is His Father. Grace has brought us perfectly to God, and grace has put us into this place of sons and by the Spirit of adoption to call Him "Father," and that is the blessedness which Christ has wrought for us. The relationship is perfect, and He puts us into it now. The results of it being in such a place are not accomplished yet, therefore the Holy Ghost is given us as the earnest of the glory, but as to our place and relationship with God all is settled.

I don't say there may not be tremblings in our poor hearts about it, but the place is eternally settled. It is Christ's place—"I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." We have not got a bit of the results of this place yet, but the Holy Ghost is given us, to keep us in the constant sense of this relationship, and that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. He who is our Priest on high has done the work which has given us this place, and now He is in the presence of God for us.

There are three ways in which we are looked at in scripture. John takes up divine life in us. There it is Christ in me, and I am in Him. Paul looks upon us as members of Christ's body, united to Him in heaven, and the Hebrews look upon us as coming to God individually. Thus in ch. x. I can go with boldness into the holiest, through the blood of Jesus. I don't call this priesthood. We go with boldness into the holiest, through the Redeemer. We don't want Priesthood to bring us there, but to sustain us when we are there. We go there into the holiest in virtue of Christ's redemption. "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." We go there as accepted in Him, and we go there perfected for ever, so that we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

It is important to understand this, because the Priesthood of Christ is often used, as if it were needed to bring us into the holiest, and therefore persons go to the Priest for what they need. Surely, God will hear them in His mercy, though they go wrong. But the thought is not right. We ARE accepted in the Beloved. Our place before God is per-

fect. We go there as accepted, as perfected for ever, and with boldness. But is that all the truth we have? I know Christ's place in heaven. But He lived on earth, and don't you? and He was perfect down here, and are you? That is another thing. It is not all the truth to know your place in Christ. It is not all that is passing in your hearts even. Have you not difficulties and trials down here? Don't you find, too, you give way sometimes through want of faith? Don't you find much in you that is not suited to heaven—to your perfection in Christ? The more you know of your place in Christ, the more you will discover of what is in you unsuited to that place; and God deals with all that is going on in your hearts according to His holiness. He cannot allow anything to pass there which denies His nature, and the place you are in Christ.

It is a great moral mistake to suppose that because I have got a place in heaven in Christ, that God is not concerned in my path down here. As a matter of fact, while present in the body, I am absent from the Lord, and God deals with us in this condition. Hence all the exercises and trials we go through now. God deals with us to bring practical death on all that is in us—upon the flesh, I mean; and here the Priesthood of Christ comes in, and not only when there is failure, though it is true of failure, and both go together too often in our wretched hearts. But failure is met rather in 1 John ii. 1, 2, by the advocacy of Christ. We don't find failure in the Hebrews, but it is everything to have the Priesthood of Christ to meet me in all the weakness and exercises that arise from my being present in the body and absent from the Lord. In all these exercises I get the blessed sympathy of Christ with my heart, in all I am passing through, where I need the help which He obtains for me. I am before the throne of grace; and there in righteousness truly; His finished work the perfect foundation of all, so that I have God for me, because grace reigns through righteousness. God is dealing with me in grace, taking up my heart in connection with all the things down here, and in going to the throne of grace what is the confidence I have? Why, that if I ask anything according to His will, He heareth me. I am talking to God and getting answers from God. That is not in itself perfection, though surely if there were not perfection, I could not go there. If you turn to the fourth chapter, you see the way our hearts are dealt with

by the action of the word—"All things naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do." But how does it go on? "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, for we have not a 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 to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Because the Priest is there, I can go to a throne of grace. I don't go to the Priest; I go to God, and I can go direct to Him, because there is One standing in His presence who is a witness of righteousness and of propitiation. He is standing there, because He is both these, and thus I can go boldly to the throne of grace. Then, alas, if I fail, He is my Advocate with the Father. "If any man sin" (not "if any man repent,") "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." He is my righteousness, and all that is settled, or I should have the sin imputed to me. If He had not been the propitiation for the sin, the sin must be imputed to me; but I stand in Him as my righteousness before God, and He is there according to the value of His propitiation. He carries on my cause before the Father, and if I fail, grace comes down to deal with my heart and spirit about it, and to restore me to communion, and to speak to me of righteousness which can never be touched; for Jesus Christ is the righteous one, where righteousness is all settled.

I do not say this gives you your highest place in Christ, "as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;" but remember it gives you the highest character of His grace. It is what makes Him precious to the heart, when, in my infirmity and failure, He helps me in the place where He has learnt to do it.

It is our need that brings out His grace, just as the fifth chapter of Romans brings out the greatness of God's love in Christ, in His dying for the ungodly. It is not God's love to His children there, but God commending His love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. It is there that He displays His love to me, when there was nothing in me to love. It is the grand absolute testimony of the love of God. I learn it in joy before Him, but it is the love of God, when there was nothing in me to love. Well

and it is the same with the graciousness of Christ. It makes me little, but it makes Christ great.

To be put into Christ makes me great, but to find Christ going the same path as myself, that He may understand every feeling I have, makes His grace great. He has been in this place that He might sustain us in it. He has been through all as a real man, thus we find Him saying, "I will put my trust in Him." As the humble dependent man trusting in God, just as we have to do. This was part of His perfection, but in it I have got One who can say to me, "I have trodden all the path before you. I know it all." Have you to cry to God in prayer? well, He spent the whole night in prayer before He called His disciples, and so on with everything we go through. He has gone before, as He says of Himself, as the Good Shepherd, "When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them." I have not one who cannot be touched with the feeling of my infirmities.

We may have a thorn in the flesh, but that was just the way Paul had to learn that Christ's strength was made perfect in his weakness; and we learn what the grace of Christ is in this lowly, humble, weak place, where indeed we learn what we are; but at the same time we learn, too, the constant and touching exercise of Christ's grace to us. This made Paul say, "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The Lord says unto you, "Don't be uneasy, my grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in your weakness."

Thus I have one who answers me when I call upon Him, though I may not know what to pray for as I ought. He may deal with me by a thorn in the flesh, but He enters into all. I learn to trust in one who answers me, deals with me, and understands me.

The next reason we have why Christ took this low place was that He might annul the power of Satan—most blessed in its place, but not being properly part of His priesthood, I do not enlarge on it now. He must take this humble place of man in order to die, that He might annul the power of Satan, for that is the force of the word "destroy" here.

The first reason then we have looked at for Christ taking this place, is, that it became God to lead Him through this path in bringing many souls to glory. Secondly, He goes through it, putting His trust in Him as the perfect man,

while going through it, that He might associate us with Himself in our exercises on our way to glory. Thirdly, He goes through death to destroy the power of Satan, but this is not the immediate object of His place of priesthood.

We come now to the closing verses—to the proper and immediate object of His priesthood. “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 deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 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 propitiation (it is not reconciliation here) for the sins of the people. For in that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Verses 14-18.) Remark how the Spirit of God associates us with Him in these verses. He will be one with the children, and as they are partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself takes part of the same. It is not so much the fact of His incarnation that is before us here, as the way He takes up the circumstances of trial and difficulty in which the children are found. It does not say sin, though they might sin, but it is their difficulties He is taking up here. Then having gone through all, He calls them His brethren, and sings in the midst of the church.

What identity this is! It is not the union of the body or of members to the Head, but so associating us with Himself, that in our midst He leads our praises up to God. Think what that is—Christ, singing in the church. Not saying, You may sing, now I have accomplished redemption, though that is true, but, “in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.” Christ Himself leads the praises in the midst of His brethren. He has so associated us with Himself now, that He takes up all our thoughts and feelings, and offers them all in praise to God. It is praise for redemption, but it is every thought and feeling I can express to God, offered up by Christ in praise. For He is man, and He knows, as none of us can know, what it was to bear God’s wrath, and this is over. Gone for Him, when on the cross He said, “It is finished;” gone for us, by His having

borne it, so that He can declare the Father's name to His brethren, and lead up their praises. It is from the Church down here that the praises go up, founded on redemption and atonement, but the expression of every thought and feeling that can be in my heart as an exercised man down here, He offers up in praise to God. Christ has gone through it all, enters into it all, and sings in the midst of the Church, a figurative expression, I need not say, but true, that He is here to lead every thought and feeling of exercised persons, because He has gone through all, up in praises to God.

And when we come to conflict by the way, it is the same thing. "In that he hath suffered, being tempted, he is able also to succour them that are tempted." He understands it. It is not a question of perfectness or acceptance before God, but the heart of the Lord entering into every trial and difficulty I am in, and carrying up every thought and feeling in the measure in which I am looking to God in it. Is He not able to succour those that are tempted? Was He not tempted, and has He not gone through the sorrow? He could say, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say;" and, besides, there was the constant passing through this world with all that is in it. Does He not understand every thought and feeling in the exercises through which we pass as belonging to God. He belonged to God, and as such was made perfect through suffering, and had to pass through it all, and according to our association with Him we must pass through sufferings. It is in that aspect He can help us, can succour them that are tempted. It is the link of our weakness with the grace of Christ as a merciful and faithful High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He has passed through all, and the exercises and trials we go through here find their echo in Christ's heart, and are a link between our hearts and His.

It is not a question of righteousness that belongs to the righteous, neither is it the question of sin, but it is having one's whole heart, as a man, down here brought into the tune and tone of Christ's feelings, who went through it all, that He might call our hearts into the channel of His own.

There is another thing in these verses immensely important; and that is, that as a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, He has also made propitiation for our sins. All rests on the perfectness of that work, but I don't dwell upon it now, as it is not strictly speaking a

priestly act, though the high priest did it. But on the day of atonement, the high priest was not acting in his functions as priest, in going between the people and God, but he was doing a work for them, when the people were not with God at all; He was taking their place in confession of sins, as the representative of the people. On the cross Christ was both the victim as well as the high priest; that is, He confessed all the sins and took them upon Him, as Aaron confessed them upon the scape goat. This brings us into the Holiest, for now there is no difference between the Holy Place, where the priests approached, and the Holiest of all where God dwells, because the veil that divided them is rent, and we now go through the veil to God. The priest stood as the representative of the people on the day of atonement, and so Christ was both offerer and victim on the cross, as the victim He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But strictly speaking this was not the exercise of His priesthood, as Scripture says, "If he were on earth, he should not be a priest."

But the people must have a ground on which they can stand in the place to which His priesthood applies. Therefore Christ made propitiation for the sins of the people before beginning His ordinary exercises of priesthood. I get Christ owning all my sins on the Cross, taking the place of Aaron, confessing the sins of the people, but He was also the victim, and the scape-goat, who bore them. He charges Himself with them, and they are dealt with in propitiation. That is the act in which as the offerer, He lays the basis for all His office of priesthood. Now He is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him.

Having made propitiation, I get next, "For in that he suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." This is not atonement, and has nothing to do with my acceptance, but it is His having suffered being tempted, that He may be able to succour me now that I am accepted. And, I repeat, it is not that we go to Christ as Priest. God does not, however, make a man an offender for a word, if the heart be right, but Christ goes to God for us, and we go to God by Him. We have an advocate with the Father. It is the same word that is used of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel of John, (chapter xiv.) and is translated "Comforter." The word means, "One who carries on our cause." The Holy Ghost carries on our cause in divine

sympathy as present in us, and takes up all our sorrows, making intercession in us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Now all that the Holy Ghost takes up in me as the Comforter, Christ takes up for me as the Advocate in the presence of God, and the effect of that is that grace comes down by the Holy Ghost into my heart. And it is in this connection that it says, "He is able to save to the uttermost," that is, right to the end, those that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is the wilderness journey all through this epistle, and about our going through it. It is not union with Christ that is spoken of here, but our exercises, discipline, and trials in the wilderness, it is the whole path of faith down in this world. Christ enters into all the trials and sufferings, and we get grace and help in the time of need.

His death has perfected us for God, while His life carries us on through the wilderness with God, until we get to Him. He ever lives for that, and in our weakness, which we feel, and quite right too, we get this blessed consciousness in our weakness, that He is living for us to carry us on until we come to God, while in the weakness we learn to look to One and to lean on One who is touched, not with a righteous walk (though of course we ought to walk righteously), but with the feeling of our weakness.

Do you believe that that is Christ's heart to you now? I don't believe this grace that is in Christ towards us can have its true place in our hearts, until we see that we have Him as righteousness; and it is a mistake to think we go by the Priest into this place in the holiest to get righteousness. Christ is there, and believing in Him we are made the righteousness of God in Him, but that which sets us in perfect acceptance with God, leaves us free to learn all that Christ is by the way. God is thinking of us too, and he puts us through the wilderness to teach us all that is in His heart, and in ours, and we have a Man sitting at His right hand, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. One who takes up every sorrow, weakness, and difficulty, as the occasion of ministering grace to us, and thus begetting in me confidence and trust, as I go on, in Himself, who is our righteousness in the presence of God. This is more than mere righteousness. It is a Christ who has been through all for me, so that it is a Christ that I can trust.

I admit, and press it too, that it is not our highest place,

but it puts me in a place where I can learn what this blessed, perfect, precious grace of Christ is. It is a place where my weakness makes me learn what His grace and sympathy towards me are, while I am present in the body and absent from the Lord.

By Him I am perfect before God, but while absent from Him I never lose the exercises of His heart for me before God, to secure for me mercy and grace for every time of need.

I would have you feel that it is a low place, but it is a true one. It is where you learn your weakness and infirmity, and it may be, too, what a thorn in the flesh is, but it is to put you where the grace of Christ can meet you, and where His strength is made perfect in your weakness. It is the daily exercise of Christ's grace that obtains help for us in every time of need. It is the time of our need, which is the time of His grace.

The Lord give us to know in power the blessed exercise of His heart toward us, while we are home in the body and absent from Him, for His own blessed name's sake. Amen.

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## FRAGMENTS.

Philadelphia is imperfect—but it is God's state of things. The word is its authority, not the church. It is Christ's word against ecclesiastical pretension; His name against infidelity. The former has authority; the latter, its value to the overcomer's heart.

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Not a trace of *Redemption* in the Fathers; or historical Christianity. Irenæus of all the Fathers held the true divinity of Christ. Justyn Martyr, who died for Him, said that it was impossible for the supreme God to become a man!

The first of "the Fathers" was about A.D. 140! John (1 John i.) gives me "From the beginning," *i.e.*, of Christianity. A.D. 140 wont do for me!

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The testing of man, from innocence to the cross, was not to try if he were a sinner; but if he were a reclaimable one!

## CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

## PHILIPPIANS.

THE energy with which the Christian is to run that race which ends in the glory and in complete conformity to Christ there, is brought out in a marked way in the third chapter of Philippians.

Indeed, throughout the whole epistle, we see this complete superiority over everything the Christian has to pass through on his way to the glory. Christ is the object to be won, and this gives energy to press on after Himself. He is there in the glory as the goal of my course; as the Apostle says, "That I may win Christ and be found in him;" "that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Thus I know what I shall get at the end of the race. I shall have Him in glory, and be fashioned like unto Him as a heavenly man. Well, and what is the road I must take to win Him? We find that in the second chapter. It is to walk through the world as He did, in every respect having the "mind" which was in Him; always willing to go down, doing the will of God in all lowliness and meekness and dependence upon Him. It is the graciousness and lowliness of Christ we get here; and then, whatever be the testing of circumstances, able to say, as in the iv. chap., "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Christ has run the race, and is set down to shew where it ends, that we may have the eye and heart where He is, on the end. *That* is what we are called to. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ has set Himself apart in the glory, and the Spirit of God takes and unfolds Him to us, that we may be like Him, and express the same mind which was in Him, in His pathway to the glory.

There is a positive progress, a growing up into Him which is the head in all things; but there is no such thing as growing in meetness for heaven. When souls are not clear as to their place in Christ, they mix up meetness and growth. But there is not such a thought in scripture. There is growing in grace; but when the apostle speaks of meetness, it is "giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col. i. 12.) There is no growth in that. The dying thief was as meet for heaven as Paul was. We are "in Christ." Is not that being meet for heaven? Not that

God would overlook Paul's labours, all true in its place, but we have to get the perception that we are taken clean out of the place we were in, and now we are in Christ, who is our righteousness and our life, and then the path in which we are called to walk with Him, is to have every thought under the control of the Spirit of God.

In the sixth verse of the first chapter of Philippians, the apostle speaks of the good work begun in them ; "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Salvation here is a future thing. It is that He has begun a good work in them. Now though not seeing this, people often speak of the work begun in them, and mix it with fitness for heaven.

There is another remark I would make. Just as salvation is looked at in the future when we are running here below, as in this epistle, so you will not find the "coming of Christ" spoken of. It is the "day of Christ" when we are to be manifested before Him. The coming is our being caught up to meet Him. That is always connected with sovereign grace—the day of Christ is connected with our responsibility. So here it is, "He that hath begun a good work in you." This is never said of our standing in Christ. There all is perfect and finished. All is divine certainty, but the moment Scripture takes up the race of the Christian, he speaks of our responsibility, and then you will find "ifs" and warnings ; but mark, no "ifs" about God's faithfulness. "Being confident that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Even when he is running the race (in ch. iii.) he adds, "If by any reason I may attain," &c.

If I want to know how a sinner can be justified, I turn to the Romans. There the question is fully answered, both as to sins, and in condemning the nature that committed the sins ; and the soul is set free in Christ, so that there is no more any condemnation. The sins are atoned for, the standing in the flesh is gone. There is a complete justification from it all, and the believer is no longer in the flesh but in Christ. In the Ephesians you don't get justification. For man is looked upon as already dead in sins, and then a new creation is brought in which is entirely of God, so that justification is not needed for that. I cannot only say as a sinner I have been justified through Christ, but I am *of God*, as it

says, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." Oh, it is an immense blessing to be able to say, "I am of God's new creation." "His workmanship." It is more than justification. God justifies the sinner—He does not need to justify His own workmanship. Everything now is of God in the new creation; who "hath reconciled us to himself." What a blessed thing to know that God has a new creation, and that I am of it. Not because we were created by Him, for in that sense we are all of God's creation, but I speak of God's new creation in Christ.

We don't find this justification, &c., doctrinally set forth in the Philippians, but rather the Christian's experience flowing from the new position. So in the sixth verse, it is not our perfect standing in Christ, but a work begun in us; and the moment Scripture speaks of the race or path to the glory there are "ifs" of every kind. I may have to say to you, He will "present you holy and unblameable, and unreprouable, in His sight, *if* ye continue in the faith grounded and settled." For unless the work is divine in you of course it will all die away. Like the foolish virgins whose lamps went out because they had no oil, and then it would turn out to be only a new profession.

Thus Scripture speaks of "ifs" when taking up the side of our responsibility and running the race; but then in this the heart is cast upon the faithfulness of God, and there is no "if" there! In the wilderness course we get the wanderings, the failures, the murmurings, but with these you get the faithfulness of God. In the land you find conflict, but the armour is there for us, the strength is there too to give us power to overcome. We are in both, though not consciously at the same moment. He points out the danger, and yet the consciousness of being in Christ is always ours. God says, as it were, "You must be dependent on me, you will need to be kept," but do not mix the two things up and say, because you have to run the race in the wilderness, and to fight in the conflict in Canaan, you are still in Egypt.

There is no conflict in Egypt. In Egypt God comes down to deliver. He is a redeemer in Egypt. First with the blood on the door post to shield from judgment, then in delivering power at the Red Sea. It is blessed to see how He suits Himself to His people. In Egypt, in their bondage, He comes as their deliverer. In the wilderness He goes

with them in the pillar of fire and cloud to guide and shelter them by night and by day, and He feeds them with manna every day. Not taking His manna away, though they lusted after the flesh pots of Egypt. Always faithful to them. If they have not faith to enter the land, but are turned back to wander for thirty-eight years, His cloud turns back with them, and He makes Himself a tabernacle and wanders with them. Then when they crossed Jordan and are to have conflict, He appears to them as a man with a drawn sword in His hand, saying to Joshua, "as captain of the Lord's host am I now come." Then when they are settled in peace in the land He builds Himself a great house like the palaces of the great ones of the earth.

Thus, when I think of redemption it is a settled thing, there is no question of conflict. It is a delivering God who delivers completely out of the place we were in; but He will go through the wilderness with you in running on to the glory. He means us to go through it that we may learn ourselves and learn Him. As He says He "humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna," &c. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years," &c. It was all that they might learn what they were and what God was. That is a different thing from redemption. If we have passed the Red Sea we have done with Egypt, and if I don't see this, I shall say under pressure as Israel did, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Ex. xiv. 11.) But God says—"I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself."

Have you not found the need of grace in the pathway since your soul found peace? Have you not found out the evil that is within you since then? What, in fact, your heart really is? Well, and you know He has been with you all through. There has been His manna fresh every day. He has provided the garments which wax not old. Christ's grace ministered to you day by day, daily bread that you could not hoard up, or it would have turned to self-righteousness, like the hoarded manna which stank and bred worms. God was carrying the children of Israel through the wilderness for a double purpose, so to speak, to teach them what they were and what God was, who was always faithful.

There is with the discovery of what we are, correction, of course, but with it always the blessed discovery of what He

is. I shall have conflict, too, in heavenly places, as they had in Canaan, and in this I must go back to Gilgal the place of the true circumcision of the flesh to learn what that is.

While running the race here we have all the infirmity of the flesh, the danger and temptation, but we have, too, the power of God. We get heaps of warnings and "ifs" when it is a question of our getting through, but never an "if" applied to the faithfulness of God. You can't get anything you can trust to in yourselves; but there comes in the blessed experience of the faithfulness of God in which we can trust. The only process is to take us off ourselves, to get the soul back to absolute dependence, *but* absolute dependence upon absolute faithfulness. And this humbles us and shows us what we are, and what the world is; we may learn it slowly or quickly. If we walk with God we learn to trust Him, if we walk with self we learn ourselves and our need of Him, but we do not learn to trust Him. It is like a careless child feeling the want of his father, but not knowing him by walking with him. If I live with my friend I get to know what he is as my friend. We get every warning, and "if," as regards the path as to ourselves, but on God's side no "ifs." "He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Surely what blessedness to say we are walking in the light because Christ has rent the veil, and we are now walking as children of light.

We ought to know in passing through the world, in a higher sense than Israel did, that wherever we go He is "a little sanctuary" to us. (Ezek. xi. 16.) So that when I look out on the world instead of its being between me and God, I have God between me and the world; having the secret of the Lord with me, and going through the world with the light of his countenance. It is a comfort if we are walking with God to be leaning on One who never leaves me. It is a comfort, too, if not walking with Him that He restores the soul and leads in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Let us ever remember that God is faithful, so that if I am in coldness of heart, without any outward departure, but inwardly distant—not walking freely and simply with Him—(oh how easily this coldness comes upon us when all is right outwardly)—well even then He has not changed—He restores. There is with Him divine power to bring you back again into the conscious light of His countenance; and this is dependent upon the revelation of Himself to your soul, so that I can

count even then upon Him to bring me back to Himself into the light and joy of His presence.

The Lord give us to run with patience (endurance) the race set before us, looking unto Him—not withdrawing our eyes from Him. Our eyes, looking straight on, and our eyelids straight before us. So to run that we may obtain—that we may “win Christ and be found in Him.” The mind of Christ in us, and able in the path to esteem others better than ourselves, for His name’s sake. Amen.

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### ONE RIGHT PATH.

THERE is only one right way with everything of God; while the shades of right (which in reality are paths of error) are countless. Now, the errant soul, or *bad* guide, is sure always to engage my soul with an enquiry about some one of the shades of right; asking me, “Where is the wrong there?” “Are there not exemplary men there?” he does not say to me, “Are you seeking the only one narrow path in this evil day (more and more narrow, as the day becomes more evil); are you seeking Christ pre-eminently? Another Mary Magdalene, only with more intelligence, and *not less love*. It was a dark hour of true regard for Him on the earth, when He Himself, and He alone, could satisfy her. It was not companions, or good men, or anything but that true, deep, *personal* interest, which love alone understands, and confers; and this is what we want on this day. If we have true personal interest for the Lord, we shall assuredly care for all that are His on the earth; but we must *begin* with Him.

It is about Himself He speaks to the angels of the seven churches. The moment I love Him, He says to me, “Feed my sheep.” (John xxi. 16). All interest for others must spring from this, as well as all instruction for myself. If I am seeking the Lord with a pure heart, I am sure to find myself (because it is the one Spirit which is leading us), in company “with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. ii. 22). If it be the meeting, or the ministry or the brethren, I am on a poor foundation.

The more evil the time, the more pointed, though less open, is the attempt to set aside the plan and rule of Christ. It has been done openly in Christendom, and now the malice of Satan would have it done among them who profess to stand apart from the growing apostacy in the world.

If I am seeking a place to worship in, I am sure to go wrong; for I am looking for what suits my taste, and I am not guided by principle; but if I am seeking to worship my Lord (then it is a Person, not a place, that is before my soul) I am sure to be led rightly, for the Spirit of light which is in the blind man (John ix.), always leads the soul that is morally outside the place of worship (as this man was, on account of his new light,) to worship the Lord of light. One faithful one, like this self-same man, confounds the most learned theologian.

Let us be like Mary Magdalene in true devotion of heart to our Lord; and like the once blind man, maintaining our light, its reality, and its source, against all comers, and *in the way*. We shall surely be rewarded as they were, with the assured presence of our Lord.

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## ECCLESIASTES AND CANTICLES.

“The words of the preacher, the Son of David, King of Jerusalem.”  
Ecclea. i. 1.

“The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s.” Cant. i. 1.

IN Ecclesiastes we see a man capacitated to test everything under the sun. He is high and wealthy, endowed with wisdom, and has all under the sun at his disposal and command. And he uses his resources and capabilities, does great work and that of all sorts to find out the good that would satisfy. Nothing that is great or expensive or magnificent is withheld from him. He walks the full and ample range of all human promises, and traffics in all the productions that spring up under the sun.

In the Canticles we see a man that is as it were nobody. He has no memorial on the earth at all. He has nothing and is nothing. He may be an object of the least possible amount in the reckoning of the world. In palaces, and vineyards, and servants, and singers, and instruments, and wisdom, in all this and the like he is poor indeed. It is the contrast that strikes us in these two little writings. The one was king in Jerusalem, the other nobody.

But dissatisfaction attends the one as he travels the wide and rich domain of his kingly earthly resources: deep and unspeakably precious delight and satisfaction is the portion of the other in company with the one unchanging object. The one little ewe lamb does for him what the flocks and the herds of the other never did, never could bring Him.

All that she whom we find in the Canticles possesses is her "Beloved." But He satisfies her, and it matters not how poor in all besides she may be, it matters not either *whence* she has Him, so that she has Him. There are the lovely gardens and there are the lofty mountains, there are the shade of the apple tree and the bed, and the vineyard, and withal the king's galleries. But it is evident throughout that it is *Himself* that makes her *all in all*. This is the deep contrast. The king in Jerusalem has nothing in the midst of everything, the unnamed, unendowed soul in the Canticles has all in all!

Are the experiences of our souls in the same company with all this? The grief of the one is that everything has disappointed him; the grief of the other is this, that she cannot make as much of her *one thing* as it deserves, having tasted its capacity to satisfy her. What a difference!

The flocks and the herds, I may again remember, left the rich man unsatisfied, the one little ewe lamb as it lay in his bosom taught the poor man that he wanted nothing else!

## FRAGMENTS.

FANCY Paul going to be brought out of heaven after being there for eighteen hundred years, to be judged, to see if he were fit for to be there! There is nothing so absurd as the thought of a future judgment to settle my case. It is too late to judge if a man is fit for heaven when he is raised in the likeness of Christ!

That which tested the heart of man, unlocked the heart of God!

People say—"Ought there not be elders in the church?" I reply "show me the church of God? Where is it?" You get directions for tongues, too, as well as elders; but that does not say they are to be set up. You must find me the church of God first; *then* we can talk of elders.

A man is always under law, when he refers his acceptance, to his own state of soul.

## "BOUGHT WITH A PRICE."

In that house of many mansions,  
 Where my Saviour waits for me;  
 Far above this world's delusions,  
 There my spirit longs to be.  
 Fain would quit this mortal body,  
 Fain would leave the flesh behind;  
 Be for ever pure and holy,  
 Where e'en now my joy I find.

Wondrous was His Grace to raise me  
 From my lost and low estate,  
 Once a beggar, now to place me  
 As a prince within the gate.  
 And far more, a throne in glory,  
 There on high awaiting me;  
 Oh, unheard of, blissful story,  
 Jesus glorified to see!

He's my title to salvation,  
 He it was who saved the lost;  
 His the only name I'd mention,  
 Oh my ransom, what it cost!  
 Cost the blood of God's Anointed,  
 For He died upon the tree;  
 Bore the judgment God appointed,  
 Must be borne by Him or me.

Now, while waiting for my Saviour,  
 Shall mine eyes be turned above;  
 Seeking, too, that my behaviour  
 Should display the One I love.  
 First *He* set His love upon me,  
 Drew me to Him in His grace;  
 Still His Hand inscribes upon me  
 Lines which He delights to trace

Lines which will come out in glory  
 Dimly trac'd down here in shame,  
 But when He appears, the story  
 Of His love they will proclaim.  
 All the path in which He taught me,  
 Fellowship with Him to share,  
 Shewed the reason why He bought me,  
 To reflect His image fair.

## FRAGMENT.

We know" is a technical expression in the New Testament, when the Holy Ghost had come. If you cannot say, "we know," you have not got Christian knowledge.

## MEETNESS AND GROWTH.

(COL. i.)

It is a wonderful thing, and the more wonderful the more we think of it, the way we are, as Christians, associated with the Son of God! We are made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; of Him, who is the beginning of the creation of God. In the same Scripture, where He speaks of being one with the Father, He says, "ye in me, and I in you." The more we dwell upon it, and think of it, the more wonderful it is: and 'tis all grace. As we read, "That in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us by Christ Jesus." This is the way the angels will learn, and principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the meaning of "the exceeding riches of his grace." They will see the poor thief; and the woman of the city that was a sinner; ourselves too, in the same place and glory as God's Son!

Now, He has brought us into the present intimacy of it, by giving us Christ as our life, and the Holy Ghost to dwell in us. He has brought us into the closest intimacy and relationship with Himself; as He said, "I go to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Think of the Eternal Son of God saying that of us! It ought to be peaceful joy to us, simply settled in our soul. It is just the one who is dwelling in it, and at home in it, who will feel and know how wonderful it is. It is that which you cannot understand if you are not dwelling in it; but when you do get inside, you begin to be conscious of what it is.

God has shown to us all the fruits of the flesh put away perfectly—that in raising up the blessed Lord Jesus Christ who stood in the place of death for us, and in setting Him in glory, and giving us the Holy Ghost,—all that is of man and sin is put away. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."

It is a blessed thing to know that by His work on the cross, He has cleared away everything that stood between us and the righteousness of God! So that there should not lurk a single suspicion in our hearts as to our place before Him. Looked at as guilty, we are justified: as defiled, we are cleansed: as having offended, we are forgiven.

He wants us to enjoy all this; and therefore does not leave us in fear of judgment. God has brought us in Christ

to Himself—set us there—and given us the consciousness of it by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Not yet in possession of all—in that sense we have nothing but the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven—but to faith we have everything. 'Tis this which makes the riddle of a christian state—we have everything in Christ—glory—eternal life—forgiveness—justification—Christ in us, the hope of glory. The work He has done is complete, and we are quickened and have part in it, and therefore the Apostle says, “we are saved in hope.” But, as to possession, we have got nothing yet, save the Holy Ghost, and God’s love shed abroad by the Holy Ghost in our hearts.

Looked at as to place and title, I am accepted in the beloved: but looking at me, I am wandering in this world very far from it all; and yet, having the consciousness of all I possess in my heart. The heart thus rests in His love, and can have nothing to desire. He has given us His own Son: His own love has put us in Christ—the very best place that can possibly be conceived, and in that sense has left us nothing to desire. We are here upon earth to be exercised and tried and tested; and to learn His faithfulness and grace.

You will find in this chapter how *growth* is spoken of, and the supply of strength; and the total separation of these from *meetness* for heaven. Scripture never speaks of any need of *becoming meet* for heaven for the christian. There is—there ought to be—growth. God will chastise us if we go wrong—we will find out all these ways and dealings of God with us; but all carefully disconnected from meetness for heaven; and wherever this is not practically known—I don’t mean as to words—wherever there is a want of clearness as to meetness hanging about the heart, you will find it hinders peace, because fulness of love is not seen, and present association with the glory. Accordingly, the standard of walk comes down. I get occupied with my own heart’s state, instead of being occupied with Christ’s heart. I never saw a person yet who was occupied with himself, who—to repeat the words—was not occupied with himself! and that is the greatest mischief in the world.

We *have* sometimes to be occupied with ourselves; there are errors, and we have to judge them; and we have to look not only that there should be no evil, but that there should be growth. But still, if I am much occupied with self, self.

takes the place that Christ ought to have, and therein is the mischief. A person will come and tell me a long story of what is in his heart ; and of course a lot of evil. But, if I ask him what is in God's heart, he can't tell me a word ! Do you think that a good state ? Certainly we shall get into scrapes if we don't judge ourselves ; but the judgment of self is an easy and simple thing, though requisite, if I am close to God, and in communion with Him. But, if I am away from Him, prying into my own heart, and all that is there ; why, there it is still !

You will find what an amazing high standard there is in this chapter, "that I *might walk worthy of the Lord*, unto all pleasing," for growth and practice. But when I talk of meetness, it is "Giving thanks unto the Father which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." When I get that, I can look for growth and a walk worthy of the Lord, and this, because I am associated with Him who has made me meet.

Do you think the poor thief was meet to go into paradise ? What made him meet ? The proof of his meetness was, that he went there ! and surely he did not go un-meet ! He went there because Christ died, and He had made him meet. It is that as to which we have to be clear and distinct.

He says "ye are complete in him ;" that is, where He has put us : and here the Apostle goes through the various things which, as a Jew, he might have known—circumcision. He might be so, or not ; a philosopher or not, and so on ; but then he shows, you have got everything in Christ. It is very beautiful the way we find this here. (Chap. ii.) "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily." In Him as a Man—all the completeness of the godhead. "And ye are complete in him." The words are the same root. We get all the fulness of the godhead brought to us, close down to us here, in Christ : but if I look up and see Christ there, I see, too, that I am complete—filled up to fulness in Him before God. It is a wonderful place indeed, in which sovereign grace has set us. Grace alone could think of such a thing.

If you want to know God the Father, where are you to learn Him ? "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Have our hearts ever looked at Christ as our object, and said while looking—I have nothing more to seek ? Think, beloved friends, what it is to look at the Lord with the power

of the Spirit of God, and to see in Him—that poor, despised man—God walking on the earth! and when one sat down by His side, and told Him their tale of sin, even if confounded unto tears, he was telling it out to God!

Is that the thought, we have about the Lord Jesus Christ? and He is the same now. God has come, beloved friends, in Christ, and said, as it were, “don’t you know Me?” In a certain sense like any man, and in a sense not the least like a man at all. Not one single motive ever governed His heart that governed the heart of man; and not one motive that ever governed man’s heart that governed His. It was a perfectly new thing in the world. The blessed manifestation of a divine path with a man in it. Not only by outward miracles, but by His ways and words. He made the hearts of those who were with Him burn in them as He talked to them, as He walked with them by the way.

Then, when I look up to God I say, “complete in Christ.” I’ve committed sins and the like, but I say, I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—I am in Christ; and I know it as He said I should, when He would send the Holy Ghost. “At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” (Jno. xiv. 20.) So I find my place in Christ before God, and myself in Him, and God has been glorified as to the way I came there. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” I can therefore give thanks to the Father which hath made me meet, to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.

True, we have not got the inheritance, and we have to learn our weakness, and failure, and the like. But this casts no cloud on the heart as to what it is before God, because it is in Christ. “He that hath wrought us for this self same thing is God”—that is, for the glory. “Who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” Do you suppose that when God has “wrought us” He has done so badly? Don’t you think God has done His work well? Surely He has! What peace this gives to the soul! But the moment it becomes a question of meetness, depending on growth, let a man look at his own heart and say it is meet for God. When, then, does he expect it to be so? I don’t doubt such desire holiness, but it is a mistake in them as to the way of getting the holiness even as a present thing. There is no mistake in saying that, “without holiness no man shall see the

Lord;" else the person don't know God at all. But the question is, how to get at this holiness? God chastens us that we may be partakers of his holiness. Not exactly that we may be holy, but "partakers of his holiness."

Now, having seen this ground on which we are set, we are complete in Christ—meet for the inheritance—and brought into heart association with it all by faith, and as having the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. Then the apostle begins about the walk of the person. He says, you must "walk worthy of the Lord"—of the person to whom you are brought—proving what is that good, and perfect, and acceptable will of God. God has given you a place in His own Son; and His Son a place in your hearts, the hope of glory. He who is the heir of glory is there in your hearts, you Gentiles. They had title to nothing.

Take a Jew, with whom He is comparing them in this passage. He was looking for Messiah to set up the glory in a carnal way; he had the promises, and forfeited them entirely when he rejected Him, and so is thrown entirely on sovereign mercy. Christ was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers." (Rom. xi.) What then? They rejected them; and we read "that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy." He states the two points distinctly.

People talk of promise to Adam. There was none whatever. There was a statement in his hearing on which Adam could rest; but there was not any promise to him. A promise to Adam would have been a promise to a man in his sins. It was a judgment on the serpent made to the second Adam, the seed of the woman—Adam was not that. "It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Meanwhile Abraham and the Jews got them. The latter took them under law conditionally, and lost them. God will accomplish them all yet in spite of their failure. They are for the present cast aside.

As to the Gentiles, what of them? What had they? Nothing! Christ was there; quite true. But mark the way, when one came to look for blessing to Him, in the case of the Syrophenician woman. Our Lord goes out of Israel, and this woman comes and speaks to Him, as Son of David, of her need. Well? "He answered her never a word." She tries again, calling Him "Lord." He replies, Let the children first be fed, *i.e.*, the Jews. "It is not meet to take

the children's bread and cast it unto dogs"—Gentiles. She answers, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." I am a poor Canaanite—a dog—with the curse upon me. I am entitled to nothing; I have no promises. Still, there is goodness in God even for such? Do you suppose Christ could say there was not? Impossible, for it would not be true. "Oh, woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The effect of it not being promise, was to bring out the way in which God was above it all in grace. There was the blessedness in God to be brought out for the want and wretchedness of sinners. Christ makes propitiation, and grace reigns through righteousness. It is God coming in and rising above all dispensation to reveal Himself, and to bring back the soul with confidence to Himself, to enable it to say, "Well, I know God, as a Jew under law and promise never could have known Him, and all because I've no right to it. I have a right to nothing, and I have got God!"

So here we find He speaks of "Christ in you,"—not yet "the crown of glory," as He will be to the residue of Israel (Isaiah xxviii. 5)—but "the hope of glory." It was altogether a new thing that Christ should be amongst the Gentiles; not bringing in the glory, but as the *hope* of the glory that was to come, and that of heavenly glory.

By this way of complete grace to a mere sinner I get what God is Himself in love, and what He is in righteousness. These both go together in my favour, and that to which grace in righteousness has entitled me—the hope of glory, so that I "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." The double character of the work of the Holy Ghost in our hearts is thus brought out. He is the earnest of the glory, the inheritance which is mine; and God's love is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost, for He is there. The glory is our portion, and therefore we are strangers and pilgrims here, until the redemption of the inheritance.

There is this difference between the Ephesians and the Colossians. In the former we are looked upon as already sitting in heavenly places—not, *with*—but, "*in* Christ." In the latter we are dead and risen with Christ; but are looked at as down here upon earth all through, but the hope laid up in heaven. Consequently this epistle, which puts us upon earth, shows us what our path is here. He says,—

“that ye might *walk* worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,” this is the measure, “worthy of the Lord;” as we read again, “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself so to walk, even as he walked.” Again, “Ye are the epistle;” (not, ought to be, which is true also;) but, “ye are the epistle of Christ.” You can’t say honestly you are that, if you are going crooked and astray. But that is the place you ought to be, “unto all pleasing”—so that there never would be anything in you that is not pleasing to Christ. God has put you by grace into this place, and now do you walk accordingly. If I have a child who does dishonourable things, of course that is thrown back on the father, and the father will feel it.

“Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.” You know God. Bring this into everything. Do everything in connection with Him. “Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power”—there I get strength. What is its measure? “His glorious power.” Beloved brethren, do you really believe these things? Do you believe that is truth concerning *us*.

Take another verse of which I said but little. The ninth. “For this cause we also since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” How often we say these words, and yet what have you been seeking in the wilderness? Is it not just your own comfort—your own will? No wonder then that you don’t know what God’s will is. Where is there a right path in this world apart from His will? I don’t know one; and there cannot be one—I am bold to say.

Suppose a child has left his father’s house, he never can go right till he has got back there first. He is not a thief in South America perhaps. He may have a very good character there—but he ought to have a bad conscience, and he never can have a right one until he goes back to his father. There is no path for me in this world as such, but the moment I get Christ then there is a path. You go and walk after Him? Poor followers we may be, but “He has left us an example that we should follow in his steps.” “Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways.” If only my heart is in the way following Christ, I shall be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Mark the wisdom of the Lord in this. Suppose I get a director—well, he directs me aright, I get no credit at all; and so there is no wisdom or spiritual understanding in me. But God has taken care to provide for me in his own way. Oh, but, says some one, I don't see the Lord's mind clearly. Then I ask, Is not your body full of light? Then your eye is *not* single—that is a clear case. Whenever I find that I don't see clearly what to do, there is something that is not single-eyed in me.

Now, all this has nothing to do with *meetness* for heaven, but a great deal to do with the state of the soul. Well, now we have seen there is this "wisdom" and "strength." Do you suppose you are now going on with brilliant effects, and manifestations of power? Is it to be all a going on with a flourish? Indeed it is not! You are strengthened unto "*all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.*" What a come down that is! It is no easy thing to be patient. Never to have your own will one minute. Is that dreadful? Stay! Ought you not to be doing God's will? Did Christ ever do His own will? He came to do His Father's will, and never thought of doing anything else. Why do you think of doing anything else? Because you like your own will best. We look at our own poor foolish hearts thus, and we find the will at work; but we should be doing His will—this is liberty. Suppose I send my child with a message, and he wants to get a run out, why, that is "the law of liberty to him."

Look at the unspeakable patience you see in Christ. Look at Paul—"truly the signs of an apostle were wrought in me with all patience." But mark what was inside it all—"joyfulness." *He* was the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; still he could desire that his joy might be fulfilled in themselves. Paul asks—"Who is afflicted and"—not I relieve him—but, "I burn not." We find that this world is not a place of rest, but of trial.

Does this not make the heart say, Why, I am going to see Christ as He is:—and hope brightens in the heart at the thought, and enables me to glory in tribulation by the way; knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.

It is not putting on outward joy, and a canker in the heart; there are sorrows no doubt in all that we pass through,

but at bottom there is joyfulness, and at the end of all Christ Himself. We have got Him as the spring of all joy in our hearts now, and we shall have Him when we are in His presence.

There is a word in ver. 13, "Who hath *delivered* us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into "the kingdom of his dear Son." It is a total taking us out of the place we were. It is not simply you are born of God—not the communication of life merely. Nor (what is the foundation of it all) the precious blood of Christ cleansing us from all sin. The blood has put away my sins; and I am born of God, truly; but there is more, I have been *translated* out of the kingdom of Satan, who rules the darkness of this world; and into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. It is the only place where the kingdom is called so, as in contrast with that of Satan. I was a slave of Satan, and I have been taken right out of it all. It is what the soul cries out for in Rom. vii., "Who shall deliver me?" It is not, "Who shall cleanse me?" It is not merely that the blood is there, and the judge can't touch me; but the salvation of the Lord has delivered me clean out of it all—into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The Apostle goes on to show how Christ created everything, and so is to have everything. "All things were created by Him, and for Him." He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. The one who created them sustains them all. Again, "He is the head of the body, the church," who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead." Death is below the lowest creation; and Christ went down below it all; the creation got under its power by sin. He went there in grace. Tasted death as others never did. The more He knew what life was—the more He felt the power of death. The more He knew what holiness was—the more He felt to be made sin. The more He knew what love was—the more He knew what it was to bear wrath. But He has come up from death, and thus as risen, He is head of the body; He takes us into closest association with Himself. He went down to death for us, and now takes us up where He is. God raises us up with Him.

We were alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet He hath reconciled us. All *things* are going to be reconciled in earth and heaven—created things; but the *saints are* reconciled. We are a reconciled people in the

midst of an un-reconciled creation. God has not left you part of this un-reconciled creation. It groans yet, and we groan too; but we are reconciled to God. So now I understand why I have the patience and long-suffering and joyfulness too. Very unsuited these two in themselves—but very suited to glorify God in. “Reconciled” is a strong full word—everything brought into God’s presence, as God would have it; and we *are* reconciled.

I add one word more. “If ye continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye have heard.” Here I get what I always do in scripture. When you look at a saint in Christ, it is all a settled thing for him. But when you look at a saint, as here in Colossians, passing through this world, you will find “ifs” and exhortations (and God forbid that we should weaken one word of Scripture,) uniformly saying to him, “Well now you must *get* to heaven—you must hold fast—judge things in yourself—lay hold, and the like. But if I am looked at as in heaven, I am “complete in him.”

Nor is there any question about the faithfulness of God in helping us through the journey. Knowing I am in Christ, my soul can say “Abba;” for I am made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, by the Father—He has done it. What do I learn then, in going through the wilderness? If the manna fails me a day, I shall be starved! What am I to feed upon then? Or, How am I to get clothes? God took care of the nap of their coats, and the manna never did fail. God must sift us and exercise our hearts, and pull us to pieces here, but none shall pluck us out of His hand. No use in telling me this, if I was not in danger of being plucked out. I learn, then, the patient faithfulness of God in my circumstances.

I would not weaken these words one bit. Christ ever lives to make intercession for me, and I am getting grace from Him every moment; but this is not a question of being made meet. “If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” The foundation is not touched, but when we fail we need to be restored, so that we are kept where we ought to be; that is, dependent upon God.

We want to be settled in Christ, that our hearts may be happy and joyful; and we want to be dependent too; and we learn, as we pass through the wilderness, that if He was

to leave us for one moment, (but He won't) we have no resource at all.

We get these things together in this epistle. The saint reconciled to God, but still journeying on with the hope of glory before him, knowing that he is made meet for it. That now he has to walk worthy of the Lord, and trust the blessed faithfulness of Him who will confirm us to the end, that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, meanwhile growing by the knowledge of God. You see how these two things come together, 1. “To present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight. 2. “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled,” &c., but looked at as to acceptance, I am made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance, and am giving thanks to the Father who has done it.

The Lord give us to walk worthy of the Lord, who has shown us such blessed grace as this, for His name's sake. Amen.

“THE HEAD OF THE BODY—THE CHURCH.”

Col. i. 15-22.

I DESIRE to speak a little on what God has said as to the Headship of Christ to the church. I shall not, however, confine myself to this glory, but shall distinguish a little some of the various glories of Christ, which are full of comfort and strength to the believer. Our best blessing is not what we have *through*, but *in* Christ. This gives the certainty of the guidance of the Holy Ghost; He unfolds what is in Christ, whose glory God has always before Him. The Father glorified the Son; but the Son adds, “That I may glorify Thee.” The one object of the Son when here on earth was to bring glory to the Father. This is what secures the fullest blessing to us. In truth a very large part of the glory of Christ is what He shares with us and brings us into.

The Headship of the Church is very far from being the measure of the fulness of the glory of Christ—it is but one of many glories. The great thing is to look well that what we have we have from God. If souls are happy Christ is everything; where the heart is not happy all goes wrong. The present state of the world proves this; it is always changing and shifting therefore to meet the need. All things totter—everything is enquired into—souls are not happy—souls are not satisfied.

There is but one object that can meet the need of a renewed heart, and but one object in which God delights: this object is Christ. When He is the object, power always goes forth from that object to the one engaged with Him. One of the great objects of Christ's work here was to show forth the name *Father*. His very special designation of Son shows that God is not only God but Father, has not only one Son, but He reveals the Son that He may have children. Now, in heaven Christ is still declaring the Father. The Sonship of Christ has nothing to do with time. When He entered this world He was still the Son. His being the Son of the virgin did not make Him a Son of the Father, as He was from all eternity. Yet even as Son of the virgin He was Son of God, as born into the world. (Ps. ii. 7; Luke i. 35.)

He *was* Son of God as Son of the virgin. The gospel of Luke insists on this. His being born into the world did not make him Son of God. He was the Son of the Father before the world was, as He said, "I came forth from the *Father*;" not merely *God*, although not first revealed as Son, yet He was the object of revelation when God revealed Himself. When God was pleased to make various manifestations of Himself, it was always through the Son; always this blessed person, not yet having become a man, but a kind of angelic manifestation of Jehovah; therefore, in the gospel of John He is called the Word—one who reveals God. Wherever you find *Father* there you always find *Son*. "The only begotten *Son*, who is in the bosom of the *Father*." Where *God* is simply spoken of, it is the Word. It is the same person, but different relationships, the *Word* bringing out the nature of *God*, and the *Son* the relationship to the *Father*. The name of Father had not been known before; it was reserved for the Son to bring it out familiarly for the heart of man.

If there is a name the Lord Jesus loves to bring forward it is "Son of Man"—because of His love—as such He comes down to the nearest and most intimate place. It is significant not only of His love but of His humility, and of His rejection, too; and love shows itself in humility. Where there is no evil love is taken up with serving; where there is evil, it cannot but be taken up with the evil until it is put away. "Being found in fashion as a *man*"—"He took upon him the form of a *servant*." He came to meet man in his

deepest need. He could not cease to be God, but He came to bring God to man, and then man to God by redemption.

One peculiarity of scripture is, that it is never like a treatise of man summing up all in one strain, and the reason is that God would make us dependent on all His Word and Himself. We might have our favourite parts, but it is good for us to accustom ourselves to the *whole Word*, and if he can't get anything from some part, not to leave off reading it but wait upon God for light, and then perhaps that very part will be our stay during some conflict with the enemy.

God has always Jesus in view; this is part of Christ's glory, that the highest relationship He adorns, and the lowest He dignifies. There is not relationship that He does not fill, and complete, and bring fresh honour to.

The Colossian saints were in danger of adding something to Christ. When people are wrong they never see it. If we had Christ always as our object, we should never go wrong. There is many a person who has just found Jesus and had a bright manifestation of Him too, and made a bold confession, but where the soul rests on this there is danger. Take Peter, for instance. The very moment after he had boldly confessed Christ as the Son of the living God, the Lord has to rebuke him with "Get thee behind me, *Satan*." But no one can go astray with Jesus in view. In the thought of *man* there is only shame in the Cross, in the presence of *Jesus* it is the measure of His deep grace—we know that the Cross and Jesus suit each other! If we separate the one from the other what should we not take from Christ?

The whole moral glory of God, in a ruined world, depends on the Cross; man could not have been blessed, nor the devil defeated, except just as a matter of *power*, and the moral glory of Christ would be gone. It was the Cross alone which vindicated God in delivering us from our sins; the victory in the wilderness did not rid us from one of our sins. It was there that one Man triumphed where all others fell.

These Colossians had been tempted by the mind of man to think that Christianity might be added to. They reasoned thus: If God's grace has so blessed the Gospel to a few poor fishermen, and done such wonders by them, what a wonderful thing the Gospel would be if we could bring in a little of man's philosophy and wisdom, and the best parts of the law, and the Jews and the Gentiles, and let Christ crown

them all! What would it be then? What the Holy Ghost insists upon is, that Christ is *all*, or Christ is *nothing*—the attempt to bring something to add to His lustre is folly, to add to Him is to lose Him! Christ is honoured by our seeing that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*." The Lord Jesus is the perfection of God and man in one person.

I must now distinguish a little between His glory, as Head of the Church, and His other glories. In order to meet this delusion of the Colossians, this epistle, more than any other, brings out the various glories of Christ, so that the Colossians might not look here or there, or at any other person, but simply at Christ, and that so the ground might be pre-occupied. When this is not so, it is the reason that we fail in walk, fail in faith. If I think of myself in the presence of Christ, I feel my own failure—if I look at another saint in His presence, I see a reflection of Christ and His perfections. There is always something to bless God for in the weakest of His saints, and something to call for humility in ourselves. That does not set aside this, that the more simply I have Christ before me, the more simply I shall know how to walk. Does not He *deserve* that it should be so? The walk of a Christian flows from Christ. I must grow in the knowledge of Christ, and then grow in my walk. Truth set forth in a *person*, a *divine* person, exercises not only our minds and affections, but calls for our worship. Hence the soul is put in such an attitude that there can be progress. It is in the path of lowly adoration and delight in Christ, that our souls make most way. If I separate truth from Christ I shall soon lose its integrity.

The Colossians were in danger of departing from this, and the apostle wants them to walk worthy, and be fruitful, and the only way is to increase in the knowledge of God. He proceeds to inform them of what God has given them in Christ; (ver. 12,) they were already made meet, not hoping to be. Can you take that place? What peace it gives, what deliverance from all effort, and the idea of something lacking? Christianity is but the revelation of what Christ has done, so that the light of God shining on you, finds nothing unworthy of the light in which you are to dwell; not one single spot on what His grace has given you, which is unworthy of His presence.

Thus you will find that although Scripture reveals such

astonishing things, it does it so very simply. Scripture unfolds to the believer a real solid ground why he should be thus blessed. What ground so solid for the believer and so worthy of God as this? The Son of God has come to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Not merely an act of obedience, or a life of obedience. His whole life was that. But what was to glorify God about sin? That cannot be you will say. This is just what *Christ* has done. Man only sees in the death of Christ a satisfaction; but God is glorified about our sins, not merely satisfied, *that* would be too meagre. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

The Son of man is not only the term of love and lowliness, but of One about to suffer. What strange words! That there was a new glory even for God—a glory which was suitable for a Divine Person. He was about to make the Cross the birthplace of a new glory! God was morally glorified in the place of rejection and suffering. Christ became a Man, not merely that God might testify His complacency in man, but to bear the judgment and punishment for sin, and to take away the curse and bring a glory to God in man about sin. All that man had ever done was to bring shame to God by his sins—God, who had looked down in patience, now comes forth; and Jesus goes down and takes that awful thing, sin, our sins, on Him, and so endures and bears them; so that God acquired a glory that He never had before, and that could only be brought to Him by His own Son, and *God* is glorified in Him." Why *God*? Why not *Father*? Because the thing that touched God was *sin*—all His life the *Father* was glorified. He that was God had become a Man; and God is so glorified that He takes up that same Jesus, the crucified Son of man, and sets Him at His own right hand. He waited for nothing, but immediately glorified Christ risen from the dead, and then glorifies Him by making Him to be Head of a new thing.

Jesus was the One who had always made God known—the Person of Him who was afterwards revealed as Son. All through the Old Testament He was the image of the invisible God—partially revealed in the Old Testament, perfectly in the New Testament. The Divine Son became a Man; He took on Him the limits of a human body. If He became a man what could He be but the First Son? Jesus came in comparatively

late in this world's history,—yet He was the first-born. How could that be? Of course there was many a one before Him, but still He would be first if He were born last. It is a question of *dignity* and not of *time*. (Adam was never born, so *he* could not be first.) The reason is because He was Creator. How could a Creator, no matter when He was pleased to be born, be anything but the first-born? "For *by* him" "All things were created *by* him, and for him." He was an *end* as well as a *means*. There is no one of all the Divine persons so intimately bound up with the origination of every thing in creation as the Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no one of the Divine persons who is surrounded with such peculiar glory, and such pains taken to manifest His glory as Jesus, because He took the place of man and bore our sins—yet He is called "*God over all*"—and this is said of Jesus, not of the Father or the Holy Ghost.

"He is the Head of the body"—the Church. When did He become so? This is the last relationship that remained for Jesus to take up. Jesus bears our sins on the Cross—Jesus goes down into death—Jesus breaks the power of the grave and disappears from view. Jesus rises not only conqueror over all the power of Satan in this world, but over sin and death, and in this capacity becomes Head of the Body, not merely as man or God, but as risen Man, who goes into heaven to the right hand of God. Then, and not before, is He "Head of the body." How do we know that? From God and God's Word—our only certain means of knowledge. Ephesians gives us ample light on this great subject. One Scripture is enough to prove anything God says. Never treat Scripture with so little confidence as to require a great many reiterated assertions to make anything true. You would not require a respectable man to prove and corroborate his words; nor a rogue, because you could not bind him to his words. You will never find the same truth repeated absolutely in Scripture—there is always a shade of difference. In Ephesians the Spirit of God is more full of the *Church*—in Colossians, of *Christ*. The Colossians were in danger of bringing in something instead of Christ, whereas the Ephesian saints were very happy in Christ, so the Holy Ghost could talk to them of themselves and their blessings. When we are occupied with Christ we can take up a thousand things that otherwise would be dangerous.

Christ is made Head over all things after He is raised.

The Headship of Christ is a heavenly relationship. You will never understand the Church, till you understand what Christ is to the Church; and it is a dangerous doctrine if dislocated from Christ. Keep up the link between Christ and the Church, and He has His place. Nothing is right where Christ has not His place—where Christ has His place then we begin to see other things in their places. You could not have the body without the Head.

When the Head is in its place then the body is formed. When He went into heaven there was no spiritual body in connection with Him, but when the Holy Ghost was sent down, then it was formed. If He had not been Son of God and Son of man He could not have been Head of the Church—but it is quite distinct. His taking a place in heaven after the work of atonement made Him Head of the body. No man has a right to have an opinion on divine things. It is the joy of a Christian to be guided by God in all things, and to be led by Him. It is evident the more a person knows, and the less he follows, the deeper will be his condemnation; like the servant beaten with many stripes. If a person does not live in what he believes all is vain show. It is a blessed thing to exercise simple subjection to the work of God. Not till the great work of redemption was accomplished did He become Head of the Church—therefore it is founded on all sin gone—founded on the *absolute* remission of sins; our Lord Himself even was not Head of the Church until He had put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

## THOUGHTS ON SACRIFICES—No. 2.

### THE SWEET SAVOUR OF THE SACRIFICE.

(Genesis viii. 20; ix. 18.)

FIFTEEN hundred years and more elapsed between the death of Abel and the next sacrifice mentioned in scripture, for the Book of Genesis is not a diary of all that took place before the flood. It records just that, and all that which it pleased God should be preserved by His servant Moses. The waters had abated from off the earth, the face of the ground was dry, and the earth was dried before the living freight was discharged from the ark. In the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, the earth was ready for man, and at the Lord's word Noah and his family came forth from their hiding place provided by God.

Before the flood Noah had been occupied with building an ark for himself and his household. After the flood he is found intent on building an altar for God. Preservation from the coming judgment, in obedience to God, necessarily was uppermost in his thoughts then,—thanksgivings for the wonderful and perfect deliverance just experienced surely filled his mind now. So of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl he offered burnt-offerings unto the Lord. He did not withhold one of the small stock of acceptable animals which issued forth with him from the ark. Taken in with him to preserve seed alive on the earth, it was right he felt to offer of them on the altar to God; so by his offering we see expressed the thankfulness of his heart, but by it we discern something more, the ground on which all things could now rest—that of a sacrifice accepted by the Lord. Noah, clearly in his sacrifice, thought of the past, but did he understand anything of the future? The amount of his intelligence has not been revealed, for it would not concern us; but what God saw in the sacrifice, and how He could act in consequence, is set forth, for in that we are deeply interested. To it let us turn our attention.

“The Lord smelled a sweet savour, and the Lord said in his heart,” &c. Thus we are permitted to learn what were His thoughts, called forth by the sacrifice, before He addressed a word to Noah and His sons; as before the flood we read of the settled purpose of His heart, before the patriarch was made acquainted with His mind. (Gen. vi. 3, 13.) Then, beholding the great wickedness of man, He was grieved at His heart. Now, witnessing the column of smoke ascending from that solitary altar (for on all the earth there was not another) He “smelled a sweet savour.”

On the sixth day of creation God beheld all His works that He had made, and “behold they were very good.” Perfect they all were, for nothing short of perfection could come from His hands. Beautiful must His works have been when Adam first surveyed them; and beautiful must that new world have been, as Noah cast his eyes over a scene full of freshness and life. But neither the works of creation, nor the world as it appeared after the flood, caused a sweet savour to arise up before God. For great, wonderful, and beautiful as are His works in creation, no mention is made of a sweet savour rising up before Him till Noah’s altar was reared, and the burnt-offerings, foreshadowing the Lord’s death on

the cross, were consumed before Him. Then the sweet savour was smelt, and the fact is noted. And wherein, it may be asked, consisted the sweetness? Noah did nothing to sweeten it. No fragrant herbs, no incense imparted a sweetness to it in God's eyes. The sacrifice itself was, and is, a sweet savour. Man could add nothing to its fragrance. The obedience to death of God's own Son has glorified Him, and enabled Him righteously to act in blessing to sinners.

When Adam sinned God cursed the ground—when all flesh had corrupted its way on the earth He sent the flood. But, neither the manner of His dealing with Adam, nor the fearful exhibition of His just wrath against sin could change man's heart. After the flood he was the same as before it. Punishment effected no change in his nature;—the knowledge gained as an eye-witness, that God must act in judgment against the impenitent, left man, as regards radical alteration, just where it found him. This God saw, however much those just out of the ark might be ignorant of it, and seeing it, spoke of it to Himself, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done;" a statement the more remarkable, because none of the human race were alive that day on the earth but Noah, and those who in obedience to the word of the Lord had entered the ark with him. Of them, the sole representatives of the human race on earth, before they had opportunity to manifest what they would be, God thus expressed His estimate, which differs very little from what He said before the flood.

Estimating man aright, He intimates He would deal with him now in a different manner; but what that would be is not here set forth—what is intimated, however, is this, that by virtue of the sacrifice, man having given Him no reason to change, God would alter His method of dealing with him. For us to understand fully what that manner of dealing is, we must turn from the 8th of Genesis to the 3d of Romans, and there we learn it (21-26), as set forth after *the* sacrifice had been offered up on the cross.

But this is not all the change which the sacrifice would introduce. With the new method of procedure towards men, an element of stability would be introduced unknown before. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall

not cease." To man in innocence no such announcement was made. The permanence of paradisiacal blessing depended on his obedience. By the flood, the natural order of the seasons was interrupted; seed-time and harvest for a year ceased: by virtue of the sacrifice, the order of the seasons will never be interrupted as long as the earth remains. Man can count on this; and man has proved it. God has repeatedly withheld the increase of the earth in its fulness; but the seasons have regularly run their round. The sun has stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon for a whole day; the shadow on Ahaz's dial has returned ten degrees; and supernatural darkness has covered the land of Canaan for three hours, commencing at midday; these things have happened, yet day and night have never failed to succeed each other; and cold and heat, and summer and winter, have annually been experienced, wherever man has found a dwelling-place for himself on this globe. An unvarying order was then announced, to continue as long as earth shall last. We can speak of a permanent, because eternal, character of blessing which exists now, on the ground of the accepted sacrifice. Eternal life, eternal redemption, eternal inheritance, eternal glory—an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—are truths with which believers are familiar—statements, describing blessings secured for ever to those who owe everything to, and are willing to receive everything on, the ground of that sacrifice offered up once for all, and never to be repeated, because of abiding efficacy before God.

From speaking "in his heart," God turns to speak to man. God spoke not in answer to any request, but of His own will. The burnt-offerings needed no prayer to make them acceptable, or to render God propitious. Before He discovered to man His thoughts, we read what they were; and unasked by man, He declared to Noah and to his sons how He would deal with them and with the earth, involved as it was in the consequences of man's sin. He addresses Noah, but He addresses Noah's sons likewise.

Here again we meet with something new, for it was new ground on which man and the earth were to stand. God had held intercourse with Noah, because he was righteous before Him. Often had He addressed the patriarch, but never before his sons. What the Lord could not do before the flood, or even before Noah and his family left the ark,

that He could, and did do, as soon as the sacrifices were offered upon the altar. In viii. 15, God spake to Noah alone; in ix. 1, He spake to his sons with him. To the righteous one God could speak apart from a sacrifice, to others only on the ground of it. Noah had a place before Him on earth because of what he was, his sons only because of the sacrifice. This, the shadow of what was to come, is clear to us, who live after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord. What place had we before the Lord's death in the presence of God? Atonement accomplished, the sacrifice accepted, one with Christ through the Holy Ghost, we stand in Him before the Father, and know a place is ours now, which never was, or could have been, had He not died. And do we not discern the propriety of God's method of acting, in speaking to none but Noah, till the ground was publicly prepared on which others could stand before Him?

The standing and the ground of it made plain, we see also that God can act towards them in a manner to which their fathers had been strangers. "God blessed Noah and his sons." A strange yet welcome sound must this have been, for since the days of paradise God had blessed no man. He blessed His works on the sixth day; He blessed Adam and Eve on that day, and He blessed the seventh day, and there His blessing ended. Sin came in, and never again (as far as is recorded) was a blessing bestowed on man, till Noah and his sons received it after they came out of the ark. This too we understand. A creature in innocence God could bless, but a fallen creature He could not till the sacrifice was offered up. And now that the Lord has died, and is risen, God has blessed His people fully on the only ground on which such a favour could be based, as Noah and his family that day learned.

Was there not something peculiarly suitable in the time when God did this? He could not do it before the flood and Noah's sacrifice, but He would not do it after the confusion of tongues had taken place. He did it before man had done anything in the new world worthy of reward, that all should see the blessing rested solely on the sacrifice; and He did it before men were scattered abroad after the flood, so that all men might be assured, without the possibility of misconception, of what Noah and his family had heard. Had the blessing been given after the confusion of tongues, all might not have understood what God had said. He bestowed it

before that event in language common to all, that all men might learn on what principle it is that fallen man can be blessed by his God.

How full was the blessing! It was an earthly blessing it is true, but a full one, and in one respect fuller than man had even known in the garden of Eden. There Adam might eat of every tree but one, and of every green herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth. He fell, and the trees, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, were taken from him, the herb of the field being his allotted portion outside the garden (iii. 18). Now Noah and those with him, have flesh, fish, and fowl, besides all vegetable productions allowed them.

In Eden man was placed under restriction, outside it he suffered deprivation, but now, in connection with the altar, Noah received a grant larger than had before been enjoyed, "even as the green herb have I given you all things." Not one single article of food is withheld, every thing fit for food is placed unreservedly at their disposal. All this too we understand, and the subject receives further illustration when we next meet with restrictions in food. At Sinai, when Israel undertook to stand on their own responsibility before God, restrictions in food appear, as the ordinances about the clean and unclean animals are promulgated. But, as soon as the great sacrifice had been offered up, we learn the removal of all such restrictions, as we read the words; "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles eat." "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself." "Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving—for it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer." (1 Cor. x. 25; Rom. xiv. 14; 1 Tim. iv. 4); for, when God deals with man on the ground of sacrifice, there is not anything that is good for him that is withheld.

To Noah and his sons He said, "as the green herb have I given you all things," to us the Word declares, "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Though God gave them more than He gave Adam, they had to learn it was not restoration to his original position, but a new one altogether that they entered upon. The difference between the place in creation of a fallen and an unfallen creature was not confounded. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," God had said to Adam: "Be

fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,” He also said to Noah and his sons. But to Adam He added, what to Noah He did not, “and subdue it.” Was this omission accidental? To subdue the earth was God’s original design for man on earth. By the fall he lost that place, and never can regain it. Another Man will effect this—the Head of the new creation. No fallen creature could ever fill this place. Their position, then, as regards the earth, told of the fall, whilst their grant of the articles of food told of the sweet savour of the sacrifice.

One more point must be noticed. By virtue of the sacrifice, God established His covenant with Noah, his sons, their seed after them, and with every living thing that was with them, of fowl, cattle, beasts of the earth, and all that went forth of the ark. The earth and all connected with it thus shared in the benefits of the sacrifice; as far as the consequences of man’s sin had reached on earth, there would be felt the blessed results of the burnt-offering. “And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.” Earth besides man was interested in the covenant, as the creature will one day rejoice in the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

Slight is the sketch here presented, yet sufficiently clear it is hoped, to enable the reader to seize the salient points of the history, and as he reads of what God said and did, to give thanks in his heart for what that sacrifice prefigured, and what God’s dealings with man on that occasion shadowed forth of the blessings believers do and will enjoy.

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### “THE WOMAN OF THE CITY, WHO WAS A SINNER.”

LUKE vii. 36—50.

PETER, like Isaiah and others in earlier days, was convicted under the brightness of the glory of the Lord. Isaiah (chapter vi.) had been brought into a vision of the throne, “high and lifted up,” and there, measuring himself as by the “glory of God,” he had found that he “came short;” and being convicted, cried out, “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” Peter falls under the same power. The light enters his conscience in like manner,

and he cries out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke v.) The draught of fishes on the sea of Galilee was just like the throne in the heavens. Both were to the conscience, "the glory of God," "short" of which all of us alike "come;" and this ends in our common conviction as sinners. (See Rom. iii. 23.)

The history does not *end* there, but it only *begins* there. Isaiah is comforted by the purging of his lips by a coal from the altar; and the amazed Peter is told by the glory itself not to "fear;" and the prophet and the apostle alike receive commission and service from Him whose throne was in the heavens, and who commands the fulness of the earth and the sea at His pleasure. (See Isaiah vi.; Luke v.)

There is, however, another stage in the power of the Lord Jesus over the hearts and consciences of sinners beyond this. We see it in the history of the woman of Samaria.

The same glory which had convicted Isaiah and Peter addresses itself to her, but in another form. The Lord sits on the well Sychar, by the side of this woman, and asks her for the smallest gift, "a cup of cold water." The King of the throne in the heavens, and the Lord of the fulness of the sea, is there as a wearied traveller who needed the refreshment of a cup of water. But it was the glory still; veiled as well as unveiled it is still the same glory. It may prepare the heart for the entrance of its beams, or it may surprise and amaze the conscience by an unexpected flood of them; but whatever be its method, it is the same glory. In this case, at the well of Sychar, it prepares the heart for the invitation of itself, which it had not done with Isaiah and Peter.

Here it veils its brightness. Jesus sits at the well, and is debtor to this poor sinner for a cup of water. He takes the place of "the less" for a moment, for "the less is blessed of the better;" and then having trained the soul for the disclosure of the glory, in due time he lets it shine out, when he says, "I that speak unto thee am he."

She was prepared. Wondering, but not overwhelmed—delighted rather than confounded—"no more spirit is left in her," but (like the queen of the south) this comes from the fulness and the joy of her heart, and not from the conviction and dismay of her conscience. The Holy Ghost had guided the light of the glory, not with overwhelming power to her conscience, as with Isaiah, but with attractive and refreshing

grace to her heart. And then all is left for the sake of it. It matters not whether we have a kingdom or a waterpot, all is left to the moment when we can say, under an apprehension of Jesus, “the half was not told me.” She is at peace in the presence of the Lord. She finds her *home*, and only desires that others may learn and enjoy it as she had done. Very gracious and excellent as all this is, it is still to be surpassed in the operations of the same glory on the conscience and heart of a poor sinner. It not only convicts and releases, reaching the conscience and then the heart, overwhelming the one and gladdening the other; it also dwells at home with us day after day, sustaining the soul in a spirit of liberty, and of thankful, happy worship.

This is its precious power. In this way it glorifies itself beyond all. It approves its work, not in the strength and impressions of the *first* moment merely, but in the fervency and joy that wait on it *continually*.

Such do we find it to be in the person of “the woman of the city that was a sinner” in Luke vii.

The case is peculiar, in the midst of all the illustrations we get in the gospel narrations of poor sinners and their communion with Jesus.

We know not who she was. Her name is not recorded. No memorial of her whatever remains either in the world or in the church, beyond this one notice of her in the Pharisee’s house. The story serves the uses of the Spirit of God with our souls, and that is all.

She crosses the path of her blessed Saviour only this once, and that but for a moment, and then retires to be heard of and seen no more. But this once is enough. More, I am bold to say, would have rather lowered the impression which the Spirit, as I judge, purposed to make.

She comes forth with the treasures of her heart and her house to worship the Lord. She comes behind Him, as He sat at meat with Simon the Pharisee, and worships at His feet. Whether He would heed her or no she enquires not—whether the Pharisee might upbraid her or no, she cares not. She was a true worshipper in the only sanctuary of God. She came as a heart-attracted sinner into the presence of her Redeemer, with all that she either had or was, to lay them at His feet.

But what did she learn from Him? That she could be there at home—a sinner in the enjoyment of assured and settled

forgiveness. The music of her heart every passing hour could then be—the Son of God “who loved me, and gave himself for me.” She had been forgiven much and loved much. She did not come to Jesus to be convicted like Peter, though she needed to be relieved like the Samaritan. Her soul now knew all this. But she came to Jesus with the expression of what her heart felt about Him; the life of her spirit shone out in her gift; and she was at home in his blessed presence whoever or whatever might be there. Her tears and her kisses and her ointment belonged to Jesus; and she brought Him on this occasion, just what her “love” the fruit of her “faith” had already dedicated to Him; expressing in His presence the liberty and joy she was experiencing, and He sets her conscience at rest by the forgiveness of her sins.

Unspeakably precious! Blessed to see Peter under conviction, so that though the ship was in danger, he forgot all but the overwhelming amazement of his spirit under the convicting beams of the glory. (Luke v.) Blessed to see the Samaritan in joy, so that she forgot her waterpot and her business at the well of Sychar under the gladdening beams of the glory. (John iv.) But more blessed still, to see this heart in the calm, chastened, satisfying, abiding, worshipping power which now fills the house and the heart of this sinner of the city, which led her to surrender to her Deliverer all that she was, and all that she had.

She returns to her unknown dwelling-place thus; and it leads us to ask ourselves, Is it so with us? Are we at home in the satisfying joy and certainty of the forgiveness of sins? Does the “faith” of that rich grace in God “work by love” in our hearts, love to Him who has loved us? And does this love, as with this poor sinner, lead on to the serving of Him, with all that we are and have? Is this the *secret* of our house as it was of this poor woman’s heart?

She comes forth just on this one occasion, to tell the secrets of her heart. She reminds one of Melchisedec—though that may sound strange and harsh. But she does. Her action reminds me of his. He came forth just on one great occasion to greet the conquering servant of God in the name of God; and to receive from Abram titles of all. She comes forth just on one occasion to worship the Lord God of Abraham, and of all pardoned sinners, with the fruits of faith and love; and to receive from Him some fresh

token of His most precious peace and favour. Melchisedec presents God to the believing sinner, and this poor woman presents the believing sinner to God; but each of them just (on two several occasions) came forth *to tell the secrets of their different sanctuaries*—*He*, the secrets of the house and priesthood which God had appointed; *she*, the secrets of a trusting heart which the Holy Ghost had filled with treasure for Jesus!

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## CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

### PHILIPPIANS.

THE apostle being so near Christ himself, looks for the same grace also in the Philippians. He prays that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," that they may "approve the things which are excellent," that they "may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ."

I would remark here, the gracious spirit that results from the heart being near to God. It goes out in love to others, and gives lively recollections of all the good that God has wrought in the saints.

There is no one who goes so deep in divine counsels as Paul, and yet none entered more into the details of God's grace in others. Look at the lists of names at the end of several of his epistles. He takes up the special grace, too, that characterizes the individuals he mentions. So here, he remembers how in the beginning of the gospel the church at Philippi was the *only one* that communicated to his need. Their present kindness in sending help a thousand miles to him in his prison, recalls to his mind their fellowship at the beginning.

It is not only as kindness to him, but he sees in it their *fellowship in the gospel* from the first day until now; because they had him in their hearts. This activity of the recollections of grace in others is the result of nearness to God. It is the *external* means used by the Spirit of God to link saints together in church fellowship. It is the secret of *walking together happily*: having, as we find in chapter ii., the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. Instead of the wretched flesh, jostling one against another, he has his mind filled with the lively recollection of God's grace in the saints. Those recollections that knit the church together are also alive in his soul.

I know there is plenty that will try us in walking with others. Perhaps there never were two men who could live together, and never find anything to try them in one another. Any how, the case is a rare one; but then, when a person is living in the power of the Spirit, he has his mind filled with the grace that is in the saint. Their kindness wakes up the sense of the grace that produced the kindness. So that it is the grace that is remembered and not merely the kindness. And we see another result of his nearness to God. He is not afraid to express his praise of them on the feelings of his own heart towards them, a thing which I often find most difficult. There is not that happy liberty there would be, if the heart were more with the Lord and more simple before Him.

Now see how the Apostle prays for the Philippians—“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” He expects not only that there should be increase of love and desire, but that they should grow too in spiritual intelligence, “that their love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment.” Really having the mind of Christ about everything, as it says, “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.” He knows exactly what will please Christ in every turn of his life. It is more than doing what is right, it is “approving what is excellent.”

Is this the desire you have before you? You are set to be the epistle of Christ. Paul says to the Corinthians, “ye are the epistle of Christ.” Mark, not “ye ought to be”; but “ye are”! This is true of every believer. You are the epistle of Christ. The Apostle is referring to the law written upon the tables of stone, and just as men read the ten commandments on the tables of stone, so ought the world now to be able to read Christ as clearly in us. Ye are the epistle of Christ. Well, but what kind of an epistle are you? Is it all clear? Can the world read Christ? You cannot say it is not true that you ought to walk as Christ walked. No Christian can deny that he should do that. “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to

walk even as he walked." And mark the accuracy of Scripture. It does not say, you ought to *be* what Christ was, for He was without sin, and you have the flesh in you, and flesh will never be better, but as for its acting there is no excuse.

As for not knowing the mind of God too; how impossible, if I am walking with Christ is it, that I should not know the mind of God as to everything. Did not He walk with Him without a cloud, and know His perfect will about everything? so should we, if we walk as He walked.

Now, which is it with us? Am I saying, I wont do anything wrong, or am I seeking to know what is that good and perfect, and acceptable will of God? We should be yielding our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, yielding up ourselves to Him, and thus, as the Apostle says, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It is the knowledge of Christ, and of the mind of God.

Do you believe the Apostle did not expect this of them? Why then did he ask it for them? Doubtless there were differences among them, some more, and some less spiritual, much as we find it now. But what is it written for, if you can excuse yourselves without it? It is more, too, than a blameless walk; he desires an increase of love, and a growth in divine knowledge,—not only to keep from what is wrong, but an approving of things which are excellent.

It is just what we see in the address to the Church of Philadelphia. The Lord reveals Himself as "He that is holy, he that is true." And in these last days nothing is more important than to know Him thus, if you are to be kept from that terrible day of sifting. "There is my character," He says, "and you must walk with me thus, if I am to keep you from the hour of temptation which is to come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth."

The apostle had to say in this epistle, "all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." The decay had begun. He to whom Christ is all, will say, Well, my business is not to deny His name outwardly, or in anything, but to keep His word; discerning His mind in everything. It requires patience, it requires a broken will, a sense of our own nothingness, but it is the path of unmixed blessing; it is the path of nearness to Christ, and the power of hope is bright in the soul. No doubt there will be with it self-

judgment; but He is leading me in my path, and remember, too, whatever removes the film from my eye to see my path clearly, removes it off Christ that I may see Him more clearly.

Can we say that this is our path, to be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ?" Here it is the *day* of Christ, as the end of their responsibility; and the apostle is looking for them to be without offence till that day. It is not the question here of the sovereign grace which will present every soul blameless in that day. God has promised that, and Paul writes to the Corinthians who were walking very badly, "who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the hope that grace has given to every saint; but here he is looking for a life answering to their place in Christ, and he prays that they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Whenever it is a question of the responsibility of the Church, it is the day of Christ; when you get the privileges of the Christian, it is the rapture; *that* is the fruit of redemption! We shall all be like Christ when He appears, and Paul cannot be better than that; but when responsibility comes in it is the appearing of Christ, and we find the rewards of labour. When He thinks of this, He looks that we may be sincere and without offence till that day.

Can we say this of our path through the last week, "without offence"? There is the power to be thus. You have a nature which has the desire. You have the life of Christ, and the faithfulness and power of God to help you. Then how far can you say, "*I* am walking sincerely, and without offence"? Paul was no better than others as to flesh or nature. The tree is bad, but there was nothing that soiled his conscience, or that hindered him following after, though he had not already attained, neither was already perfect.

The mere fact of the existence of flesh does not give a bad conscience, but if I let it act, then the conscience *is*, or *ought* to be bad. It is like my having a bad, evil-disposed man in the house, who is bent on doing me mischief. Now as long as I keep him locked up, though he is in the house, he can do me no mischief, but if I open the door, I let him out to do the mischief, and I must suffer for it. There is no excuse for the flesh acting. You may have been careless and not have had the armour on, and the thing has hit you, but then it was this want of watchfulness and self-judgment.

But still remember, even if it is so with you, that He restores the soul. He may have to say to you, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." All you need is grace to desire, and emptiness of self to trust in His love, and faithfulness to you! I don't say that the light shining upon you will not humble you. It will, and will make you judge yourself for the failure, and be broken before Him, but it will bring with it the joy of His presence; and thus it is we learn what His grace is to us.

Now see what the Apostle could say of Himself, "according to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." When he wrote this he had been four years in prison, chained to a soldier, and yet he could look back upon his course and say, "as always, so now also." Oh! if we could say this, that Christ had always been "magnified" in us; and our earnest expectation and hope was that "as always, so now also?" What a great thing to say; but what happiness! The Lord give us to have the eye upon Him, discerning things that differ—that are more excellent, that Christ may be glorified in our walk! Would it not make your heart happy to say, "as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body?" Well, I say, if there is watchfulness that it may be so? There will be no opportunity for this in heaven. It is here that He exhorts His people to be a faithful people abiding in Him, living witnesses in the world of what He is to them! You are called to walk with this blessed object before you.

Is there not power in Him that it should be thus with you? You can't say—No. For He says "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But we have to remember the strength is in Him, and not in us, and to have the living earnest desire in our hearts to glorify Him from moment to moment, learning that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; going through our duties in life, but doing them to Christ and for Christ! Our affections not engaged with them, but with Him; thus manifesting whose we are, and whom we serve, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh!

## "THE BODY OF CHRIST."—No. 2.

(Ephesians iv. 1, 6.)

It is of immense importance to distinguish between certain privileges which are common to all God's children, and that special place of the Church, the Body of Christ. Many people are apt to draw their thoughts of what the Church is from the measure of their own judgment as to what its privileges are; and as their perception of what God has brought them into is but scant, they draw a measure very far short of the special, wondrous, distinct privileges belonging to the body of Christ. In other words, the tendency is to make everything turn upon one's own salvation. Where there is no distinct light of God this is natural. Hence you will find some who speak of the Church as if it was a certain institution, or many institutions by which we are to be saved. A very little measure of divine light disperses this delusion.

Now, in order that God should have what is called here the Church, the Body of Christ, there must be a solid basis, and consequently there was a vast deal that had to be done.

Man was created, that was no basis; man believed, that was no ground. Man had the law, but not one or all constituted the Church of God. Another and incomparably greater step was needed in order to this great work of God. A divine person had to come to make known God, as God was never seen in this world before. To display what God is in a man here below was the singular glory of Jesus, at least of His life here below. This was what He was doing from first to last. God had never shown Himself in all the gracious affection, tenderness, lowliness, and nearness, and intimacy of love thus adapting Himself as Man in the midst of men. A Man, but the true God and eternal life. A Man, indeed, the perfection of one; but God, in all goodness and tender mercy, visiting poor vile man put far away from Him.

But it is an awful fact that not even God come down in love, attracted the heart of man. Man was at first surprised, astonished, pleased. But the more God showed Himself, His holiness, His love, and His truth, the more man hated Jesus. The issue was the cross. It was not merely bringing God down to man, but so dealing that man can be brought to God. As Jesus living brought God to me, so Jesus dying and rising again, brought me to God. God cannot fail in

what He undertakes; and this is what He undertook: “To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;” to give me the certainty that all sin is gone. Not more truly could the Israelite, confessing his fault over the head of the victim, have the certainty that what he confessed was gone, than the believer that the sacrifice has blotted out incomparably greater sins for ever.

God is now bringing the believer into eternal things. He is giving him the certainty that all is clear between him and God; and mark, all this is distinct from the question of the church of God. After Christ had accomplished redemption He went into heaven, and then it was given Him to be “Head over all things to the church.”

After Christ was exalted, we find for the first time a body beginning to be formed on the earth. There had always been believers on the earth. Since the Jewish people had been guilty of rejecting the Christ of God, now God worked an infinitely greater work than the Jews had ever thought of.

Let me tell you my own salvation and yours is not, and never was God’s great object on earth. God was revealing Himself in Christ, and that does meet man as a sinner, and secures him salvation—taking him out of himself and giving him the comfort of knowing his sins forgiven.

Then having, first of all, glorified God as a living man, He glorifies God about sin in death; and then having been raised from the dead, He goes into heaven and sends down the Holy Ghost; and thus the church of God begins to be formed on earth, in union with this risen Man at the right hand of God. If so, what a character union with this risen Man gives to this body. What ways, what walk are suitable to such a person?

If what I have been saying is true, he that belongs to the assembly of God is already reconciled to God; begins with his sins pardoned and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to dwell in him as a seal. It was never given as a seal to Old Testament believers. In order to give the Holy Ghost as a *seal*, there must be the finishing of the work begun, there must be the *resting* on the work of God;—not only born to God, but the work finished. That was not done till Jesus died and rose again.

The Church of God does not begin to be contemplated as a thing on the earth until redemption was a settled thing. What could make sin less? Not even the coming or living

of the Son of God in this world could make our sins one whit less. No living agonies of the Lord Jesus that could touch sin. Nothing but His death in atonement could do that. But, then, God meets the whole need so perfectly that He gives those who believe, even before the Church is formed, the *absolute certainty* of sin gone, and peace with God. The same day Jesus says to His disciples, "My Father and your Father," and "peace be unto you." Thus, there is no question about the Church of God at all until sin is disposed of for those who believe, and they are put in possession of peace with God by Him who made it.

Now we will see what is meant by the Church of God and the Body of Christ. The Lord Jesus had this before Him when He prayed for His disciples in John xvii. ; not in the exact shape of the body, or the assembly ; but He prayed that they might be *one*—one in display of unity, which hitherto had not been the case. Unity does not consist in life, but the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God is given because we have life. Life is individual, and can never be anything else. I have it for myself with God, but the Spirit of God, while giving the enjoyment of this life, is a bond. Life is not a bond, but the Spirit of God is. Accordingly, in Eph. iv., we are told "there is one body and one Spirit." The whole subject of unity is here pursued, and it is divided into three parts. *First*, in verse 4, essential unity. *Secondly*, in verse 5, unity of profession. *Thirdly*, in verse 6, a remarkable unity, the largest and on the one hand most universal unity, and the narrowest and most intimate on the other. In John xvii. 11, the Lord prays "that they might be one" as the Father and Son were ; and at first it is beautiful to see that the disciples did walk in this wonderful absorption, and were lost in the glory of the Saviour—no ruffles—no rivalry. What was the effect on the multitudes ? We read that they were "of *one mind*, and great grace was upon them all."

In verse 21 the unity takes a far larger place, for He prays for those who believe through their word. First, it was *Apostolic unity* (Jno. xvii. 11), and then *unity of testimony and grace*. Through the Apostles' words multitudes were brought in. This became a mighty testimony to the world. Finally, the Lord gives the last a *perfect* unity, "that they might be made *perfect* in one"—unity in the display of glory (Jno. xvii. 23). Thus there are three steps.

This you will observe is all connected with Christ, and the Father's purposes concerning Him.

In Ephes. iv. it takes a form more in connection with the vast scope of God's counsels as given to Paul to bring out. Now this unity is never lost, nor can it be impaired in its essential character through the failings of His people. “One body” still abides. “One Spirit” still abides, though it may not be maintained. They never can disappear from the earth, nor can there be a moment's suspension, and for the simple reason that Christ is at the right hand of God. If He is there, He necessarily has a body in living union with Himself. Because Christ as risen Head is in heaven, the Holy Ghost is here.

That accounts for another thing. You know numbers of saints have departed, they are with the Lord, but that nowise affects the body, because the Holy Ghost is here. He is the soul of this body. Saints departed to be with the Lord are just as truly His own, and when He comes will be found in their place, doubtless a more important place than ours (Apostles, &c., for instance), but that does not affect the great truth that the body is where the Holy Ghost is, and the Holy Ghost is *here*.

All will allow that the Son of God came down from heaven; just as much, though in another way, the Holy Ghost has come down. He, as truly, has been sent down from the Father. He is here in a true personal sense, while the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. The glory that belongs to such a calling remains entirely unaffected by all the passing circumstances and events of this life. This is the essential unity.

Next, there is an external unity. Notice, it is *one Lord*; not one Son, because eternal life depends on the Son, while one might name the Lord only to dishonour Him, having never possessed eternal life. A person might call Him Lord and make shipwreck of faith, and might not depart from iniquity. Accordingly, one *faith*, *i. e.*, one common creed, which is common to all who are not heathens or Jews. A professing Christian has this “one faith” and one Lord, which a Jew did not own. “One God” is what he owns. It refers to Jesus here. The Church began with the preaching of this one Lord. (Acts ii. 36.) He is the great Church object. It was the great distinctive object as a matter of profession. There were persons who owned Him as Lord

who had not eternal life. One Lord, one faith, consequently one baptism. Plain water baptism is meant here; we have had one Spirit in verse 4. All this is a question of profession.

Now we have the third unity, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all." I take that in the largest possible sense; God is viewed as the source of all. So in that sense everyone is a child of God just as a creature of God, made by His hands. "All we are his offspring." Now, while this is true that there is a sense in which He is God and Father of all, there is the most special unity added after, "He is *in* you all." In *saints*, and in *none else*. Not in the vague sense as all come from God, but in the closest possible sense in which all derive their *new* being from Jesus Christ, as children of God by adoption.

This unity of the Spirit never was known before. This new and blessed gathering together, and formation of a new association, constituted Christ's body, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost was now found here below. The great point of faith for every believer is to be certain this abides for ever. No failure compromises the certainty that the Spirit still abides. One of the most dangerous notions found among godly persons, and founded on the state of the Church, and a very just error because of its ruined state, is to seek to rebuild it. When men find out this they say, "Then why not begin again?" Accordingly many and many a soul has thus looked for an out-pouring of the Spirit, but when we depart from the Word of God we are in danger.

Do you think it is a question of men? Not so. God for His own glory has chosen the very weakest and worst of men to make them the witnesses of His power and love. This is their only safeguard; and if they are subject to Christ, according to the Word of God, then there will be testimony according to God. We have the power of the Spirit to make us vessels for the Master's use and the glory of God.

Suppose that all saints were in intercommunion all over the world, and that there never was such a notion as distinct churches, and that the body of Christ was known by all, not to be a mystical thing in heaven, but a certainty on earth, then come practical difficulties. But they are contradicted by facts. The Church of God is scattered, not united. Does this alter the truth? Does the Holy Ghost abide? Is the Lord Jesus still at the right hand of God?

All Ephesians (chap. iv.) abides. What is to be done? Blessed be God, we are not left without a way. Before the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the church He thought of it. He knew it all, and provided in His own infinite grace His own name as a centre—"Where two or three are gathered together to *my name*, there am I in the midst of them."

In 2 Tim. ii. also, the Holy Ghost has more particularly provided for this very difficulty. (v. 20-21.) This is of deep importance. As long as simply individuals in the assembly had to be dealt with, all was clear. But supposing the *assembly* itself becomes corrupt and is adrift, what is a man to do? "There *is* one body and one Spirit," &c. I am never to give up God's truth. The Holy Ghost abides still, and one body and one Spirit. A Divine Person is equal to the difficulty. All that is wanted is faith on the part of the church of God.

Which do you prefer, God's thoughts, or man's thoughts—a church according to God, or a church according to man? The Apostle Paul supposes this bad state of things and makes provision for the need. What are we to do? "Purge ourselves," and withdraw—you cannot clear out the vessels to dishonour. You are not a reformer and cannot make a reform. You must not seek to wage an ineffectual war. The word is "purge himself." A Christian person is never free to go on in one single line contrary to the word of God, or to disobey it in one point. How can this be avoided? You cannot leave the great house, *i.e.*, Christendom. You don't cease to be in it.

What Paul wants is for real Christians to behave like Christians. Seek God's mind on His word. I am bound not to sanction what's contrary to God. I am always bound to depart from what is contrary to Him. There is danger of two things. Either that our value for union with the children of God might make us sanction evil, then we are sacrificing God's glory to the church, and it will be found that what we thus uphold is not the church. On the other hand, supposing a person had a sense of the evil, it would make him heedless of the bond. This can never be.

We are bound to own the one church of God there is; and to walk with those who are doing so in the bond of peace. There is great comfort for the believer in the thought that the greater the flood of evil, the greater is the exhibition of the Lord's love. How wonderful is His heart of love that,

however great the difficulty, the Lord, in His considerate goodness, has provided for it. Oh! let it all make us feel *how much* we need *Him*. The more difficult the path, the more tenderly is His love shewn, and the more does He make His grace manifest to our hearts.

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## SCRIPTURE QUERIES AND ANSWERS.

### "THE FIRST RESURRECTION."

\* \* \* I had difficulties as to the passage of which you write. (Rev. xx. 4.) Comparing it with other passages, such as 1 Cor. xv. 54, &c., which disappeared in seeing that "the first resurrection does not describe a *period of time*, but a *class of persons* having this characteristic name.

In the passage, (Rev. xx. 4) you will find three divisions named;

1.—"I saw thrones, and they sat upon them and judgment was given them."

2.—"And the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God."

3.—"And those (*OUTLIVES*) which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark in their foreheads, or in their hands."

The first division is general, embracing all who reign with Christ, taken up at the Rapture. He sees not only thrones, (as Dan. vii. 9; where for "cast down," read "set,") but sitters on them; they are now occupied.

The second class are those slain under the fifth Seal. See Chapter vi. 9, 10, 11.

The third class are martyr victors under the full power of the beast. See chapter xv. 2.

The two latter classes who seem to have lost the earthly blessings of the kingdom by death, are specially named as having gained by death a place in the heavenly glory, with those who then reign with Christ.

The first of these—the sitters on the thrones—have been raised or changed at the rapture; and the last two are said, in company with them, to "live and reign with Christ a thousand years;" and are all then named "The first resurrection."

My chief difficulty was, how that Isaiah (xxv. 8) used the words, "He will swallow up death in victory"—referring to the resurrection at the *end* of the tribulation and deliverance of the remnant of Judah. While Paul uses the same passage,

quoting it in i. Cor. xv. 54, with reference to those caught up before it *begins*, and when Christ comes, whether raised or changed. I may here remark that Isaiah xxiv. 21, gives the judgment of the hosts of the high ones on high—Satan's power, (Rev. xii.) and the Kings of the earth upon the earth, (Rev. xix.) Then, after that, in chap. xxv., in the details of the deliverance to the remnant of the Jews, and the removal of the veil of idolatry from the nations, he uses this passage :—"He will swallow up death in victory," with reference to what happens at the *end* of the tribulation.

In 1. Cor. xv., Paul quotes and applies it to those who are taken up—raised or changed—*before* the tribulation. This seemed strange. But the moment you understand that the "First resurrection" is a *class of persons* running all through the crisis, or time of judgment, from the rapture of the saints, till Christ's appearing, it is readily seen how the prophet and apostle legitimately use the same words, having a similar class before them, which are split up into sections, as I may say, in Rev. xx. 4, and are technically named "the first resurrection," though not raised and taken to heaven at the same moment of time.

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## FOUR GREAT SUBJECTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. The manifestation of *eternal life* to us in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the communication of this divine life to us. (John's Gospel and Epistles.)

2. The *promises* of God from Adam downwards, and especially to the Jew, made good to this people, and accomplished in Christ. (Paul.—See especially Romans.)

3. Mercy to the *Gentiles*. Do.

4. The *Church* of God united to Christ, its Head, by the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven: the mystery. (Paul.—See especially Ephesians.)

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## INDWELLING SIN.

THE fact of indwelling sin is, if we walk with God, an *occasion* of communion—I do not say the *cause* of it; but in so far as it has acted, it is a barrier to communion, though grace comes and restores.

## GOD IN CHRIST.

Ah! God is other than we think,  
 His ways are far above;  
 Far beyond reason's height, and reached  
 Only by childlike love.  
 The look, the fashion of His ways,  
 Love's lifelong study are;  
 It can be bold, and guess, and act,  
 Where reason would not dare.  
 It has a prudence of its own.  
 Its step is firm and free;  
 Yet there is cautious silence, too,  
 In its simplicity.  
 Workman of God, oh lose not heart,  
 But learn what God is like;  
 And in the darkest battlefield,  
 Thou shalt know where to strike.  
 Oh blest is he to whom is given  
 The instinct that can tell,  
 That God is on the field when He  
 Is most invisible!  
 And blest is he who can divine  
 Where real right doth lie,  
 And dares to take the side that seems  
 Wrong to man's blindfold eye.  
 Oh learn to scorn the praise of men,  
 Oh learn to *lose* with God;  
 For Jesus won the world through shame  
 And beckons on His road.  
 God's glory is a wondrous thing,  
 Most strange in all its ways;  
 And of all things on earth, least like  
 What men *agree* to praise.  
 As He can endless glory weave  
 From Time's misjudging shame;  
 In His own world He is content  
 To play a *losing* game.  
 Muse on His justice down-cast soul,  
 Muse and take better heart;  
 Back with thy Captain to the field,  
 God shall *soon crown* thy part!  
 His justice is a bed where we  
 Our anxious hearts may lay,  
 And—wary with ourselves—may sleep  
 Our discontent away.  
 For right is right, since God is God,  
 And right the day must win;  
 To doubt would be disloyalty,  
 To falter would be sin.

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