

# "WORDS OF TRUTH."

EccL. xii. 10.

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

NEW SERIES.

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VOL. III.

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# WORDS OF TRUTH.

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## JUDICIAL AND MORAL CLEANSING.

THE scene in the early part of John xiii. is more or less familiar to many; it contains the account of the Lord washing His disciples' feet, just before He went away; an action typical of His present service for "His own which are in the world."

Perhaps we have narrowed it too much, confining it to restoration, and removal of soils which we contract in passing through the wilderness.

To make this clear, we must look a little at the Priesthood of the Lord in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first thought of Priesthood was to prevent failure in the redeemed: it is the thought of divine and perfect love. No doubt we do not always bow to the Lord's action thus with us, and then we have to be cleansed afresh by His washing of our feet.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Christians are looked upon as travelling through the desert, and Christ is spoken of as both "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." We find this in type in *Moses*, who came out from God with His word to the people as an Apostle, and in *Aaron*, the High Priest, who went in to the presence of God with the blood of atonement for the people. Both are found in Christ.

In Chap. i. we have Christ as the Apostle. He comes from God to us revealing all His mind—nay, Himself. In Chap. ii. we have Him as the High Priest, who goes back in all His suitability to the office, because He is a Man. But when He really enters upon His priestly office for us He goes to stand between a reconciled people and God. They are looked upon in their journey here below on earth, and there is no mention in the Hebrews of *their* being seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places. Christians are ever there, of course, but are not so seen in this epistle. Having then the *ability* (chap. i.), and *suitability* of Christ as High Priest, in chap. ii., we are told to "consider Him"

in these two characters—the “*Apostle*,” who came *from* God *to us*, and the “*High Priest*,” who has gone *for us* to God.

Then in chapters iii. iv. we find the people in the wilderness on their journey; and in the end of chap. iv. we have the two instruments by which He carries His people through the wilderness. First, the Word of God—not in its *formative*, but (as verse 12 shows) in its *detective* character—“The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” The Word of God looks down into your heart while you are in this place of weakness—as His eye, and if there is a thought or purpose there not of God, it deals with you, it “discerns it.” It deals with the *will*, and when this will would lead you aside, the Word exposes its workings in its true character.

The second instrument is the Priesthood of Christ to meet and sustain us in our *weakness*. If the Word of God in its breaking-down power was all we had, we should say that it was very disheartening. But it is not all. There is a great deal more. “Seeing we have a great High Priest, that is passed *through* the heavens”—the Son of God—not One who cannot be touched with the feeling of our *weaknesses* (this is the same word as in 2 Cor. xiii. 4, He was “crucified *through weakness*”), for He was in all points tempted like as we are, except sin. A true heart looks for His sympathy, not *with sin*, but with the weakness: He looks for us to have common feeling with Him *against sin*. Then He goes on—“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for *timely help*.”

There is a great difference between “timely help,” and “help in time of need.” Suppose you are walking across the street and fall down and hurt yourself, and I run and help you up—that is *help in time of need*. But suppose I see you are likely to fall, and I hold you up *to prevent* your doing so—*this* would be “timely help.” Now, there is a Priest—Christ in glory—who knows your nature, and that you are likely to fall at any moment. What then is to keep you? Let us go boldly to Him that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for “timely help.” What then is the language of your heart? “Hold *Thou me up* and I shall be safe.” If the heart is always

in the consciousness of weakness, knowing it's need of being held up, it will rejoice in His timely succour. On our side there is the sense of weakness, on His there is ability to meet that weakness; and God's instruments to prevent the saint from falling are thus effectual.

We stand in the consciousness of sins having been put away—deliverance from our standing as children of Adam; and we have been brought into an entirely new place, with the question of *sin* and *sins* all settled, and redemption complete. Sins—our part; death—Satan's part; and judgment—God's part, all met and settled: and we draw near boldly to the throne of grace.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is really the complement of that to the Romans. Romans sets us in divine righteousness with God, while Hebrews maintains us there. In Rom. v. 10, we are said to be "saved by His life," and in Rom. viii. 34, "who also maketh *intercession* for us." In Heb. vii. 24, we find allusion to both—"He is gone on high, and ever *liveth* to make *intercession* for us."

Now we turn to John xiii. The doctrine of the Gospel of John does not go beyond the seventh chapter. In chap. vi. 35 we have *Incarnation*; in v. 51, *death* (we eat His flesh and drink His blood); and in v. 62, we have *Ascension*—"What, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before;" then in chap. vii. we have the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the whole thing is completed.

In chap. viii. a fresh thought comes in. We find Him as the Light of the World, detecting every man's conscience. In chap. ix. He gives eyes that men may see. He *is* light in chap. viii., but if any one wants to see, he must have eyes to do so; so in chap. ix. we read (v. 6), "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle;" the clay (incarnation) and the "spittle," something more, and from Himself, and "He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay." That which he gets from Christ Himself gives him sight—and all are in antagonism to the man in a moment. Who does not know that when your eyes are opened to see Jesus the world is against you? Pharisees, Jews, parents are against this poor man; but he has got his eyes opened.

Chapter x. gives the doctrine of chap. ix.—the ninth being an illustration, the tenth the doctrine. Then at the close of the tenth chap., He completes the circle of His

mission in Israel, and comes back "*to the place where John at first baptized,*" beyond Jordan.

Now in chapters xi. and xii. we have God putting His seal on Christ in His three Sonships. He is the Son of God in xi. ; in chap. xii., the Son of David, when He enters Jerusalem, and then the Son of Man ; but as soon as He speaks of Himself as Son of Man, "the corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die."

From xiii. to xvii.—a series of chapters which give us the new service and teaching of the Lord as beyond the cross. In xiii., His new service for His own is taught. Ex. xxi. gives us in figure a picture of this service. The Hebrew servant, who would not go out free—he loved his master, his wife, his children—he would not go out free. His master shall bring him unto the judges, and shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl ; and he shall serve him for ever.

You will find what a remarkable place "*the ears*" have in the Scriptures which speak of the service of Christ. In Psalm xl. 6, 7, "*Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire : mine ears hast thou opened* (or digged). Then said I, lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." The Son says, "*I delight to do thy will.*" What is the place of a servant ? To have *no will*—the ears always opened to receive commands. In Isaiah l. 4, 5, the ears are again mentioned—"The Lord God hath opened my ears to hear as a *learner*," (not as the "*learned*."). "*He learned obedience by the things which he suffered.*" Here, notice, it is never said that He learned *to be obedient*. To a child, you say, you must learn to *be obedient* ; but of Christ it is said, "*He learned obedience*"—because it was a new thing with One who ruled all, and besides there was not the will to be *disobedient* in Him. "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared. Though he were a Son, *yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered* : and being made perfect," &c.

In Ex. xxi. the servant's ears were bored through with an awl, and he became a servant for ever. So Christ : He loves His Master, His Church, His people—all. His time of service here on earth was over. But there is one thing about the

Lord's service above all others—*He never gives it up.* He is the servant now, will be the servant during the millennium, and, when all the countless ages of eternity are rolling on, He will be the blessed servant still. When He has reigned a thousand years, and delivers up the kingdom to God, He will continue His service for us.

He *took* the form of a servant. Could *you* take the form? No; because you *are one*. How blessed if the heart can enter in the smallest degree into what it cost Him to do this. In the gospels He labours and toils for poor souls, and when He has done it all, He begins again when gone on high. He came to have a place with His people *here*; but received it not; then He will prepare them for having a place with Him *there*; He cannot remain as man in a defiled earth, but He will have His people there, and He will fit them for the same.

There is a difference between a *judicial* fitness for God's presence and a *moral* fitness for it. *Judicially* you never can be more fit than you are through the blood by which you have been brought to God. But it is by the washing of *water* by the Word that you are made *morally* fit for the new place.

Suppose the Queen takes up a child from the gutter, and adopts it, and brings it to her palace, her perfect grace would give the child the *title* to be there; but the child needs a suitability, a moral fitness for the palace. Then it is educated, and clothed, and fitted for the sphere in which it now will move. The educational acquirements do not give it its title to be in the presence of the Queen; her adoption settled that point. And so with the Lord's people. They need as sinners to be brought nigh to God, and all His holy claims judicially answered for them. Then as saints they require that their whole nature be moulded and character formed for His blessed presence. How much more do we see one saint enjoy God's presence than another; yet that other possesses as perfect a title to be with Him as the former. But the soul of the other has walked with and learned Christ, and grown up to Him.

Let us examine the blessed scene of Jesus washing the feet of His disciples, which seems to present several distinct thoughts to our minds:—

1. That He who could not remain with them below was now about to educate them morally for the new sphere in which they would have part with Him—for the Father's house on high. This is the positive action of His love.

2. That while this is the primary thought in this service of love, He would also sustain them while walking through this scene, keeping up the separation between them and their present place here, with its defilement and sin. This is the negative side. And

3. That if they bowed not to this preventive ministry of His love, and contracted soils by the way, He would cleanse them by the washing of their feet, and restore them if fallen aside.

There is no action of our life in which the Lord has not been dealing with us. If you turn aside to pray, you will find when you are consciously before God that He deals with your conscience when there is a soil; but with the heart when the conscience is free. God is said to be *light* and *love*—the love attracts the heart, the light deals with the conscience.

The great instrument by which the Lord thus deals with us is “the washing of water by the Word.” “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” This action was to be known by Peter at another time thoroughly.

I think you will find, that when this action has not been fully effectual, through the frowardness of our hearts here, the judgment-seat of Christ (2 Cor. v.) will bring to full result, through the full and entire judgment, according to the light of God, of all that was unjudged here, of all that the water of the Word had not practically dealt with, by reason of the stubbornness of our hearts.

There may be many who pass away quietly and happily to heaven, and yet after a course which has been exceedingly faulty. It is also possible for a soul going on well (through grace) to be happy at the Lord’s table, though he may have a deal of unjudged “flesh” about him. Peter did not then understand the full meaning of this action of the Lord. And after his denial of Christ, we find him (in chapter xxi.) at dinner with the Lord, and yet the root of flesh was still unjudged in him. *The judgment-seat of Christ must bring out all that which has not yielded to the action of the Word now.*

It is a great thing to know that Christ is preparing you for this place *morally*, though the Blood has prepared you for it *judicially*. God, in righteousness, pronounces you a righteous man, if you have faith in His Son. But there are many things as you walk along that would

draw you aside, "Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life" (Prov. v. 6). All through this shifting scene the Lord is dealing with you, and the Word of God, if you are feeding on it, is maintaining you in separation from it; it is dealing with your conscience if you are faulty, or with your heart if free. "When thou goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when thou wakest it shall talk with thee" (Prov. vi. 22), may be said of it most truly and happily in its action every day. The Lord, by His Spirit and through the Word, brings the thoughts of heaven down to your hearts, and your hearts up to Him in heaven.

How solemn is the thought that the present time is that in which our capacity is formed for our place and enjoyment in the glory of God! No doubt that all is foreknown and prepared of the Father; but still, just as the soul has learned Jesus here, so will you be able to enjoy the glory.

You find this illustrated in Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, in John xi. Just as each one learned the Lord in this scene where death reigned, so each one had their place in the lovely typical and yet real scene of chapter xii., where the glory is portrayed. Just as we constantly find that the character of a person's conversion gives a tone to his walk, so his walk will determine his place in the glory! The present, then, is the time of preparation for that scene in capacity and growth; the enjoyment of it will be by-and-by; yet, as we have said, all will be as ordained of the counsels of God. This action of the Lord detects what is in your heart, by the entrance of His Word giving light there. Now that may be done without your having a bad conscience, for you may never have thought that the thing detected was unfit for the light. Many things and associations that are not according to the light may never have been thought of as not suited to it, and hence the conscience is not defiled. They are shown you in this mystical washing that you may cast them off. If you do so, the conscience is undefiled, and it is not then the removal of a stain, nor the restoring the soul when defiled, but our moral education by the Lord in the suitability needed for the new place.

But, supposing you were to go on with them after they have thus been detected, you would need to be restored. The Lord's thought is that you should go on with nothing between Him and you, and by the action of the Word He is

discovering to you what would come between, that you may be the better able to enter into the enjoyment of the Father's love, in communion with Himself as well now as by-and-by.

Under the law, at the brazen laver the *hands and feet* were washed. This laver stood between the altar and the holiest. Both hands and feet had to be washed; because the Lord was taking cognizance and forbidding the *actions and walk* of the old man there under the law; here it is to a man who has the divine nature, but who has also a principle within him which loves sin, and whereby he becomes defiled. Then the Lord deals with the conscience; and "we have an advocate with the Father" (1 John ii). How important it is, then, to how *immediately* to the washing of water by the Word: there is *then instant restoration*. Keep a thing that the Word has detected still on the conscience, and it corrodes there. One's *felt* state will show him surely that communion is lost, while all the time you have not got to your *real* state. The longer it is there the more difficult to have the sense of restoration. Remember, too, that the moment you are made conscious of failure, it was the Lord who did it.

The two most prominent of the disciples at the Supper, whose course is thrown together in the whole Gospel (Peter and John) were converted in different ways. John heard the word of John the Baptist. "Looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God" (John i. 36). He is ravished by the beauty of Jesus, and attracted to His person. A little word is let out from John Baptist's heart, and he follows Jesus. John Baptist began his ministry (and rightly so) with the terrible denunciations of coming judgment; but the last two notes in John i., as to the person of Christ, attracted their hearts, and God allows one of those men to tell you "it was about the tenth hour." Do you think God is indifferent to the day and the hour when a soul was brought to Him. Nay; of one it is written here in the eternal Word of God.

Now, when Peter was converted, it was different. Andrew goes to Peter, and brought him to Jesus, and he said, "We have found the Messias, which is being interpreted, the Christ." The results were very different in their path. You never find that the Lord had to tell John to follow Him, though He has to say to Peter—"Follow thou me." There are the same distinctive marks in the character of their ministry. John is a true Kohathite, bearing the golden vessels of the tabernacle, the person of Christ.

Peter never went beyond the Messias made Lord and Christ. It is remarkable how his conversion gives a character to his ministry in his epistle and service, as John's so markedly did so in his: though, on the other hand, the call of God does all. Still, the character may be much altered afterwards, which is encouragement to us. The men who gathered to David to the Cave of Adullam had but sorry characters, yet they had fine characters when the kingdom was set up. Why? Because they remained *with* David. So the power of assimilation to the Lord will keep us in His presence, and mend our characters.

"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter, therefore, beckoned unto him that *he* should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" John then, drawing more closely, gets the mind of Christ, and this because he was leaning on His bosom. He did not draw near to get the mind; but, because he was near, he got the *mind* of the Lord. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them that is the one that loveth me" (John xiv). No matter how ignorant we may be, if we love Christ, we will get the intelligence of His mind, and He will manifest Himself unto us. Like Mary in John xx, she had no intelligence, but she had a heart that could well nigh break itself for Christ, and she got the manifestation of Himself as well as His commandments. To such hearts as these He manifests Himself. Is *your* heart resting on His bosom? Is your ear open to hear His word? And are you so near that He communicates to you His mind?

Why do we go to another to solve a question? Because we feel that he is nearer to the Lord than we are.

In Judas there was the habitual allowance of sin, and this was the groundwork of his fall: it hardened his conscience. The Lord could not reveal His mind to the others until Judas had gone out. The presence of the traitor hindered the manifestation of His glory.

"A new commandment I give unto you" (v. 34.) There are in other languages two words for "*new*"; but in English we have only one. Suppose you see a man with a coat of an entirely new fashion and cut that never was seen before, we say, This is a new coat, *i.e.*, of entirely a new kind. But, suppose you see an ordinary coat, but of *new cloth*, there is

many a coat like it, still in that sense it is new. It is in the first sense that this word in verse 34 is used—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another *as* I have loved you." And this love is that which rose beyond and above every littleness and stupidity and failure of His disciples.

Do you seek to love each other *as* He did, in such a way that it will rise above every pettiness, every bitterness, every hindrance, "*As Christ* loved you?" Divine love is never thrown back, and never changed by the unworthiness of its object; it is superior to everything. Like a stream, whose banks may for some distance be smooth; but when they become crooked and rocky, the same stream flows on and on, unchanged in its course and its quality; such is His love.

In Peter's case we find a solemn yet blessed lesson, that a fall never happens to a Christian without a previous warning, and without some dealings from the Lord. If Peter had taken the warning he might not have fallen. May we be of those who know His voice, and bow to the washing, knowing the blessed object He has in this action of His love. Amen.

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## MEDITATIONS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### CHAPTER I.

WE come to the examination of the history itself. Moreover, this begins with the great truth of which we have spoken. The disciples should have been waiting at Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We will find, besides, the proof of another precious truth. The Lord, after His resurrection, gave commandments to His disciples by the Holy Spirit (*v.* 2). We shall not lose the Holy Spirit when we are raised; a simple truth perhaps, but which shows us how great will be our capacity for happiness in that state. Now a great part of our spiritual force is employed in making us walk uprightly in spite of the flesh and the temptations of the enemy; but then neither of these things will have any existence. All the power of the Spirit in us will be employed in making us capable of the infinite happiness in which we will be found. We will rejoice according to the force of the Spirit, as Christ

gave commandments by the Spirit to His disciples after His resurrection.

Remark now the intimacy of the Lord with His disciples; He "spake of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (v. 3). Christ was now glorified, but His heart, full of divine love, was not changed, nor was He estranged from His own. When He appeared to Saul He said, "I am *Jesus of Nazareth* whom thou persecutest." He speaks with Ananias, with authority it is true, but as with a friend. He opens His heart in regard to Saul, when He sends Ananias to speak to him. He was not ashamed to call His disciples on earth His friends; He does not disdain to treat us like friends now. Immense blessing! To think that the Lord of glory is near us, and esteems us as friends and as beloved, and can have compassion likewise on our infirmities.

The disciples still clung to the visible kingdom of the Lord in Israel (v. 6); their hearts were still Jewish. They fully believed that He was raised, but they were looking for the accomplishment of their hopes in the restoration of Israel as a nation by the Saviour, now that He was risen from the grave. The Lord does not tell them that kingdom would not be restored to Israel—contrariwise—but that it did not belong to them to know the times which the Father had put in His own power. The kingdom will be restored to Israel; when is not yet revealed. The Son of Man will come at an hour when He is not expected. He is now seated at the Father's right hand until His enemies be made His footstool. Meanwhile He is gathering out His co-heirs, those who are contented to suffer with Him; and by and by caught up in the glory, they will reign with Him. The time then, of the Lord's return is not revealed. It was not revealed to the disciples, but they would receive, the Lord said, in a few days the power of the Holy Spirit, which should come upon them, and they would be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem, in Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. They were made to be eye-witnesses up to this point of His heavenly glory. The Holy Spirit was then sent by Him (see John xv. 26, 27). We will find a little later that Saul saw Him in His heavenly glory for the first time, of which he was to be the special witness. Now the Holy Spirit has fully borne witness to this glory, as we shall see

in the discourse in the Acts, as also may be seen in the Epistle of Peter and elsewhere.

But here we find before the coming of the Holy Spirit a very remarkable testimony raised by means of angels. The disciples were looking steadfastly towards heaven as Jesus went up. This was very natural. The beloved Saviour lately restored to them in resurrection was again leaving them (at least to all appearance), for heaven, it is true; and this should have strengthened their faith. He had left a promise of the power of the Holy Spirit, which, however, was not yet come, and therefore they still lacked the consciousness and the direction of this power, which was to reveal all the truth. He had gone, and what were they to do? They must wait.

And as their eyes were fixed towards heaven, behold, two men in appearance, but in reality angels, are close beside them, asking them why they were gazing into heaven, and giving them the revelation of His return—a very remarkable fact, since the Lord after the Last Supper had given the disciples to understand that He was going to the Father; and the first comfort He gave them was that He would return and take them to Himself in the Father's house, where He was going to prepare a place for them; and then He speaks of the presence of the Comforter (John xiv).

There He speaks of His coming to introduce His own to be near Himself in the Father's house; here of His appearing in glory, when He would be seen from the place where He had gone. There He Himself speaks of the special privilege of His own according to the personal affection He had for them: He wished to comfort them; His heart wanted it; He wanted to have them near Him in the very same glory, and that they should see His glory, but specially that where He was there they should be also; here it is His return in glory—He would come in like manner as He went away.

This was the first consolation of the disciples once deprived of His presence. Then another Comforter would be given to remain with them meanwhile down here. But whether it be the declaration on the part of the Lord of His love, or the revelation made by the angels, the first thing in the heart of the Saviour and in the revelation of God is that *He will return*. Immense is the gift of the Spirit during His ascension and for ever! Immense is the nature of the condition in which redemption has placed the assembly of God down here! but its hope and the climax of its joy will be in

seeing the Saviour as He is, of being ever with Him, like Him—of seeing and being for ever with Him who has loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and of seeing Him face to face. Supreme blessing, too great for us, were it not the fruit of something still greater—the cross and sufferings of the Son of God!

Once this blessed Saviour has done this, and that the Son of God has been made sin for us, and has died as a man upon the cross, nothing is too great; it will be but the fruit of the travail of His soul. He will be satisfied. His love will be satisfied in our happiness and in our being with Himself. Compare also Zephaniah iii. 17, where love and glory are inferior to this, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing." The Father will rest in His love, and in the fulfilment of all His counsels for the glory of His Son, showing at the same time in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. Such is our expectation. Moreover, the angels speak.

The disciples return to Jerusalem, and there they remain together in an upper room. They continue with one accord in supplications and prayers with the women and with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren. But we do not find the effect of the promise of the Father until the second chapter. All we find at the end of the first chapter is connected with a Jewish state of things, that is, with the condition of the disciples before the coming of the Spirit. But they had, however, an understanding which had been opened by the Lord to understand the Word. They had not the power of the Spirit, but they had the understanding of the Word. Still their state was in relationship with Christ raised; they were illuminated by divine light communicated to them after His resurrection.

These verses perfectly agree with Luke xxiv. 44-48. Then comes the promise of the Spirit, the fulfilment of which we find in chap. ii. Peter's well-known energy makes use of the knowledge given him by the Lord in applying Psalm cix. to Judas—"Let another take his office." They cast lots according to the Jewish custom, leaving the decision in the hands of God. Matthias is chosen and added to the eleven disciples. Verses 13-26 are parenthetical. The Sabbath day's journey, the lots, and all the circumstances make the actual state of the disciples clear and the

thought of the Holy Spirit in this passage. They work with the understanding of the Word of the Old Testament, but the Spirit had not yet come. It is important for us to understand the difference. The Spirit now gives the understanding (1 Cor. ii. 14), but that is not of itself power.

The Lord is faithful to conduct His own in the path of truth! His grace is sufficient, His strength is made perfect in weakness, and besides He always gives us the necessary strength to accomplish His will; but the power of the Spirit is another thing besides. Now we are in a special manner called to follow His word, although we are weak (see what is said to the Church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii). Impossible that Christ fail us in our obedience, and His strength is sufficient for us. Faithful to His word, while in weakness we are looking for Him, we shall be pillars in the temple of His God when the hour of glory shall come. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit dwells in believers sealed with Him by the Father according to His promise.

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## THE LORD'S HOST.

JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED AND THE WAY OF ESCAPE: THE BUNCH OF  
HYSSOP.

### CHAPTER II.

I PASS over all the signs and wonders wrought in the land of Ham; and also over the compromises proposed by the enemy under the pressure of God's hand, until the moment when the final message was sent by Moses to Pharaoh. This we find in the eleventh chapter of Exodus.

And here I note the marked and striking analogy between this, and the Lord's present dealings of grace. With the message of the fullest and richest grace of the Gospel, comes the most solemn and final revelation of a judgment to come—as final as it is solemn and searching to the soul. No threat—no language of denunciation or declamation; but the terribly calm, clear statement of the utter ruin, after every trial and test, of man's estate; of the sure and certain perdition and eternal ruin of every soul with whom God will enter into judgment, according to his works. The truth has come and disclosed all: it has shown what God is, what man is, what Satan is, what the world is, what judgment is—all things are laid bare. He does not *threaten*; but has *revealed* judgment to come as the solemn result of grace despised.

"And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt." When all were asleep and apparently secure, the judgment would fall: "And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." A cry when the blow had fallen. Signs and wonders had produced no contrition of heart: Pharaoh had hardened himself still more. Threatenings of judgment were of no avail. The plan of deliverance was unfolded by Him who knew His own requirements, and who was about to enter upon the scene as a relentless, righteous Judge. The *supper-time* was the time to hear and to act; when the *midnight* came the blow had fallen, and then it was too late. The procrastinator might plead how well he understood the plan of deliverance; but he had folded his arms and judgment had overtaken him. He might cry, "Lord, Lord, open," but the door of mercy had closed for ever!

If we examine the parable of the Great Supper in Luke xiv., we find that it was not those who were living in open sin who refused this final call of grace. I say final, because you will note that the Gospel Feast is set forth as the final meal of the *day* of God's dealings with men. The Lord was at dinner in the house of this Pharisee at the time. The *supper* is the last meal of the day before *midnight* comes. This is very significant and striking. The gospel comes after all God's previous ways of testing and trial have passed.

The *morning* of innocence, with its lovely moments of freshness, when God came down to visit His creatures, when His creation was unsoiled with sin, soon passed away; and man fell, never to return to this state of creature blessedness.

Then came His *noon-day* dealings with man, now with a conscience obtained when he fell. During their continuance came the frightful wickedness of men and angels, the earth was filled with corruption and violence; and God had to wash the polluted earth with the mighty baptism of the flood. Then men set up the devil for God in the renewed earth, and the whole world was worshipping him, in the passions and corruptions of their evil hearts.

The *afternoon* testing of the Law followed. It told man what his duty was, both positively and negatively—its "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not," taught him what he ought to be. But it never disclosed what *he was*, utterly and hopelessly ruined. Nor did it tell him what *God was*, with a heart full of tender pity and perfect love. Then the

prophets were sent to recall him to its observance lest judgment should overtake him, and these they stoned.

It was in the *evening* that at last God revealed Himself in Christ. Would man now be won? Alas, no! Not one single heart was attracted to Christ of itself. They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. It was a lovely evening, after a day of storm and evil, which was ushered in so brightly; but how soon to close in around the darkness of the cross, where men quenched (as far as they could) the light of heaven.

God had another moment of mercy. The *supper-time* of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, with the message that "All things are now ready;" "Come," for the *midnight* of judgment was about to fall. But "*all with one consent* began to make excuse." Men who were not living in sin, but who were doing lawful and right things—attending to the farm, the merchandise, or their family affairs—even they also refused the gift of God.

I know nothing more solemn than the fact that when the Lord lifts the veil and points to the awful judgment of a future scene, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke xvi.), we learn there the *compelled remembrance* (the deathless sting of remorse) of times gone by and advantages lost for ever, in this present day of grace. How dreadful then for the professor, the procrastinator, the careless man. "*Son, remember!*" tells its own tale more truly than the many words which might be used to paint the scene. But it is not my present task to dwell on this side of the picture; I desire rather to unfold in some measure the certain way of escape from this judgment to come. The one is as certain as the other.

God had a serious question with Israel on the night of the passover. They were sinners, and sin had constituted Him a Judge. He had come down to deliver them and to bring them to the land. He appoints a way in which he can righteously pass over them as sinners when judging the world. The blood of a spotless lamb was to be taken, and placed upon the two side posts and lintel of the doors of their houses, which were to be closed, and none of the people were to leave their houses until the morning.

I did not purpose dwelling lengthily on this well-known scene, which has been such a fruitful theme to others. But I would press a few points which may not have been fully noticed. In the evening the lamb was to be slain, and its

blood sprinkled by the believing Israelite in the "obedience of faith." This was done by means of a "bunch of hyssop." Now this points to a most significant and important thought in connection with the gospel. Many know the plan of salvation, as it is termed; they are as clear as possible as to the truth that salvation is by faith alone, and that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it only, is that by which security from coming judgment depends. They know well those words, that "without shedding of blood is no remission"; yet they never have had, so to speak, the Bunch of Hyssop in their hands, though this illustrates the real link between their souls and their acceptance of the gospel. This is the point concerning which so many are ignorant.

A Bunch of Hyssop is used in Scripture on two occasions. (I do not now refer to its typical import in the offerings: see Lev. xiv., &c.) On one occasion it is used by an Israelite with blood (Ex. xii). On the other it is used in the hand of a clean person, for an Israelite, with water (Num. xix). In both cases it signifies *humiliation*. The Psalmist refers to it in this way in Psalm li. 7, where he cries, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." This was the moral cleansing of his soul by complete humiliation.

An Israelite who believed Moses concerning the plan of deliverance on that "night to be remembered," did not fold his arms quietly, as many, and do nothing. No; he was up and doing, in "the obedience of faith" (Rom. i. 5; xvi. 26). "Believing in his heart" the glad tidings by Moses, he was seen outside the door of his house, before the world "confessing with his mouth" the acceptance of this message, and thus appropriating his personal share in the efficacy of the blood of the lamb. It was truly humiliating for him to go outside before a world of idolaters, into whose sins he had sunk (Ezek. xx. 6—8), and confess that, although he was one of God's chosen people, he could claim no immunity from judgment but by the shelter of the blood of the lamb. He thus justified God and condemned himself. It was humiliating, but right to do so. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Here is the link between the soul and Christ, which so many need. The Bunch of Hyssop has never been grasped; the soul has never bowed in the obedience of faith, and in the conscious reality of its state, not only believing the gospel in the heart, but confessing it with the mouth to salvation.

How many are the dealings of God with souls to awaken

them to the sense of their need, that His heart may thus be free to pour its love into theirs. How varied are His ways to bring them down to the point of blessing—even the sense of their own ruin in His sight. Once there, there is no hindrance ; how simple then becomes the story of His grace. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart : that is, the word of faith, which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ” (Rom. x. 8, 9).

The poor thief was there in conscience, when he rebuked his fellow, and said, “We indeed justly.” He had the Bunch of Hyssop in his hand at that moment. Not claiming superiority over the railing robber ; not excusing himself ; but justifying God, and condemning himself ; *then* there was no hindrance to the love of Christ making itself known to him. He believed in his heart, and he confessed with his mouth, and went to paradise with Jesus that day.

So with the woman of Syrophenicia ; “Truth, Lord,” confessed the fact that she could claim nothing from Him who was there before her, with His heart full of mercy. “Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs”—told that her heart had penetrated God’s, and knew and believed that there was a blessing there even for one who had neither promise, nor right to claim His grace. It was the bowing of the conscience before the Lord in the obedience of faith ; and the moment she is there the spring is touched—His heart is free to give the blessing which He had come down to reveal and bestow. “O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” You cannot think too well of God ! Like Jehovah of old wrestling with Jacob until he brought Him to the point where He might bless him, Jesus, as it were, wrestles with her till she has a sense of her true state, and then the blessing comes.

An Israelite on the evening of the Passover, with the bunch of hyssop in his hand, conveys this truth to our souls. The blood he sprinkled was to meet and satisfy the eye of God. It was to present a righteous ground to Him in judgment, for passing over a man whose sins deserved that the blow should descend on him, even more righteously than on his Egyptian neighbour next door.

The midnight of judgment came, but all was settled beforehand, as it must be for us. Our sins cannot be worse in the day of judgment than now. God’s way of escape from

judgment then will not *have changed*. It is as certain now as then. His love has anticipated that day in giving His Son. His Son has come, and has presented His blood before God. God has pronounced on our state as sinners already; and the day of judgment cannot speak more plainly than "There is none righteous; no, not one"! Christ has borne our sins and put them away before that day comes, and God has sent the news of His having done so. "He that believeth not is judged already (*ἡδη κέκριται*) because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John iii. 18).

But you may say, I know it all. I ask then, Are you forgiven? Are you safe under the shelter of the blood of Christ? I do not ask, Do you *hope* to be so? I ask, Are you safe? If you believe God, you are. If you believe your own heart, you are deceived: "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool" (Prov. xxviii. 26). May you know what it is to have had the Bunch of Hyssop in your hand; your heart confessing that your only security is that God, against whom you have sinned, has looked upon that precious blood of Jesus, that He has accepted it already, and the day of judgment will not change its value, or make it less precious in His sight. In virtue of it He has declared, "I will pass over you." Do you dare to doubt that He has accepted it? You could not, for you know He has. I do not ask, Have *you* accepted it, but do you believe *He* has done so? The proof that He has is that Jesus is at God's right hand. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. i. 3). He has by Himself purged the sins, and he who believes has his conscience purged of them. Suppose some one has *paid* a debt which I owed and could not discharge; well, I cannot be sued for it, but I shall be afraid to meet my creditor. To be happy in his presence, I must *know* that some one has been kind enough to do it: so God declares that it is done. Then my conscience is free, and I can afford to look now into my heart, which I dare not do before.

The question of all our sins has thus been settled before the day of judgment, and according to God's mind. If not, we never can put them away. Christ cannot die again: "death hath no more dominion over him." He "was once offered to bear the sins of many." I say "all our sins;" for all were future when that precious blood was shed—when Jesus bore them in His own body on the tree. If all were

not there, if all were not borne and put away, they will most surely come up again at the day of judgment, and that would be eternal ruin. Thank God He has borne ours who believe. Others may reject it and perish, but there the love is, and there is the work of Christ to save all who believe in Him.

### 1 THESSALONIANS, iv. 13-18.

IT was a happier task for the apostle to write to the Thessalonian saints on the subject of the resurrection than to the Corinthians. The need at Corinth arose from the speculative, free, reasoning intellect of a Greek. The Corinthians opposed difficulties to the mystery of the resurrection, very much in the spirit of a Sadducee. The apostle instructs them, it is true. Surely he did—for his was the pen of the gracious, forbearing and patient Spirit of God. But he answers them with much of righteous rebuke and anger—instructs them with a witness against their own condition of soul (1 Cor. xv). But it is not so in 1 Thess. iv. The Thessalonians were not opposing science of reasoning to the mystery. They were in sorrow because of their sleeping brethren, knowing not what to think of that state, whether they might not lose the coming of Christ for which they on the earth were waiting.

It was wounded and tried affection that appealed to the apostle in them; it was human, carnal reasoning that challenged the apostle in the Corinthians. Therefore the apostle delighted to answer the Thessalonians, and he does so without a single rebuke, but hastens to comfort them, to tell them not to sorrow as if there were no hope respecting them that were sleeping, for that there was no feature of joy or glory that was reserved from them at the coming of Christ that would not be shared by their departed brethren. Jesus would bring them with Him. They would rise from their graves ere anything was done with their brethren who were then living. They would then ascend together with the living to meet the Lord in the air on His descent from heaven. And finally, *all*, whether quick or asleep, would after that for ever be with Jesus.

Here was comfort without the thought of a rebuke. Here was full sympathy without the least resentment. Here was pouring in fresh light and instruction, in the joy of the Teacher for the sake of His disciples. Hope was established in their souls, and more than the breach that was in their spirit was repaired.

## AN APPEAL.\*

FEELING most deeply and truly the solemnity of the present moment, and at this the commencement of another year, in which, or even within the next moment of time, we know not what may come to pass, I would earnestly, and most solemnly and prayerfully, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, ask you to inquire and see if you are ready, come what may, to appear before the Lord? Have you ever asked yourself the question, "Were I to die at this moment, what would become of my immortal and never-dying soul? Am I saved? Or would my portion be with those who will be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth?"

If you have not asked yourself these questions, do so now. There is not one moment to be lost. And if you can answer, "I am saved," most blessed and happy is your lot. But if not, oh! do not, I entreat you, rest till you have settled the question. It is an awfully important one. Words can but very poorly express the importance of it.

I would now try, in a few words, the Lord helping me, to show you the way to be saved; the way to have your portion among the redeemed of the Lord. If you will try, for one moment, to think of the limitlessness of eternity, you will then see what a blessed or hapless lot is yours.

I need hardly attempt to prove to you that we are all by nature born "dead in trespasses and sins," and that there is none righteous, no not one. It is the fruit of the fall of our common parents. If you do not know and feel this, and are resting on any single particle of self-righteousness, you are in a fearful state, out of which may God in His great grace awaken you, and convince you of the truth of the above statement! But if you do, and have felt the burden and weight of your guilt, and long to be relieved of it, then, blessed be God! it was for such that our most blessed Lord Jesus Christ came and died and bled on Calvary's cross. He said in His own precious word, that He "came to seek and to save that which *was* lost;" that He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The only requisite title to possess Christ is to know that you are a sinner—it may be, one steeped in many sins, or it may be,

\* From one who is since with the Lord, and written for the opening of a new year.

having lived an outwardly moral life, you have not been mixed up with much outward sin ; but whichever describes you, there is but one way in which a Righteous and Holy God can look on you—as “dead in trespasses and sins.” Blessed be His name! the gospel holds out a full, free, and unconditional pardon to all who will but trust Him. It says that the Son of Man must be lifted up, that is, crucified, “that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but *have* eternal life.”

Mark the words, “whosoever” and “have.” The first proclaims this eternal life to *all* who will believe ; the second shows that salvation is eternal and present. Most true and blessedly certain, and worthy indeed of Him who planned and perfected the scheme of man’s redemption.

Then again, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but *have* everlasting life :” the same words occur with as great distinctness and force, and I would ask you to meditate on the words of this passage. What wonderfully unfathomable and perfect love the love of God is ! Well may it be said, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that *he loved us*, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins ;” “and not for ours only, but for the whole world.” It is a wondrous love.

“He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life, and he that believeth *not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*” You will see here again that the subject is made as clear and distinct as God can make it. The word “hath” is as forcible as in the former quotations, proving and showing that the salvation of those who believe is *sure, positive, and present*, and to be enjoyed by them as such, and you will also see the reverse is as positive as the former. The condemnation of God is *pronounced* as surely on those who *do not* believe, as the life everlasting and eternal is assured to those who do believe. Oh, the blessed, happy, wondrous place in which the blood of Jesus Christ places the believer ! No matter how weak he may be in faith, still if he has faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His death and blood-shedding, he is not only saved eternally and without doubt, but has the same life as Christ ; he is looked upon by God as *one* with Christ ; standing in Him in righteousness ; sanctified in His sanctification, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; this to be enjoyed even here by faith.

Let me, then, entreat and pray you to trust *alone* and *solely* to Him who "was dead and is alive again," who came and dwelt on this earth for our sakes, who met the curse of a broken law—who knew that without shedding of blood is no remission, and therefore became Himself that perfect sacrifice and made that atonement which alone could satisfy the claims of a righteous and holy God—who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and gave His own most precious blood to wash us clean.

That blood now speaks in one of two ways to your soul—either as a witness against you, if still refusing to acknowledge its preciousness and all-saving power; or as a witness before God, whose all-seeing eye forever rests on it, that you have been made whiter than snow in His sight.

I would in conclusion wish to call your attention to the beauty of the type of that precious blood as in the 12th chapter of Exodus. In it the Israelites—God's people—were told to take a lamb, precious emblem of the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," to kill it, and take of the blood and strike it on the two side-posts and on the door-post of the houses. This was to be the sign that when the destroying angel passed through that land he should pass by and leave untouched all those who were in the house on which the blood had been sprinkled, for God had said, "When *I* see the blood *I* will pass over you and the plague shall not be upon you." Had the Israelite a shadow of doubt in his mind as to what God had said being done? No; he went into his house after sprinkling the blood on the door and sat down quietly to eat the pass-over while the fearful plague of destruction was going on around, knowing well that what God had said was true, "When *I* see the blood *I* will pass over you." And thus it is now, not the type, but the blessed reality. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, *cleanseth us from all sin*," and this blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat of God; His eye rests on it, and sees all who trust to it as sheltered from the destroying angel, "Sin." Why not trust to this precious blood, and take God at His word as did the Israelites of old? Mark, it was not said to the Israelite, "when *you* see the blood *I* will pass over you." No; but "when *I* see" it.

Trust it, and you will never be disappointed. Look not for anything in yourself; suppose not that you do not value that precious blood enough. God values it as priceless, and

sees you as white as snow by it, and under its shelter, if you will but rest with simple, childlike faith, and believe what God says about it.

Again, I would prayerfully entreat you not to let the present moment pass. You know well the uncertainty of time, and none of us may ever see another year, or even month or day of this year. God is now working all around in His wondrous and perfect grace, convincing of sin and converting sinners to Himself, by the working of His Holy Spirit. Do think what a dreadful thing it will be should you let this time of grace pass unheeded.

The Church of God is fast being perfected, and who knows how soon the last soul may be called in? Do ponder on the state of your soul before God, and again I say, rest not till you have the "assurance of salvation" in your own soul—enjoy that perfect joy and peace in believing which a merciful and loving God intends His own to possess in this present time.

May God, in His mercy, bless these few words to your soul for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake and His own glory. Amen!

The late G. S. P.

## MEDITATIONS ON THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS.

### CHAPTER VII.

THE apostle has shown in the two previous chapters the effect of the death and resurrection of Christ with regard to justification (chapter v.) and practical life (chapter vi). In chapter v. we are delivered from the *guilt* of sin, and in chapter vi. from the *power* of sin. But there remained yet another question to be answered, namely, What is the result of this doctrine with reference to the demands of the law? What place does the law take in the face of Christendom, Christ being risen?

We shall often find the word "law" in this chapter, but not always in connection with one and the same subject, as we shall see. Law in general is a governing principle, which demands subjection. If a man stands under a law, he is under an authority which imposes obligations, or makes demands upon him. Whether he fulfils, or does not fulfil them, whether he is able or unable, whether he will or

will not, the law demands and is satisfied with nothing else but its accomplishment. The apostle now addresses himself in this chapter to those who well know the true meaning of law.

"I speak to them that know the law" (v. 1). The expression "law" here is quite general. "Know ye not, brethren, how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?" As long as a law exists or remains in force, so long is he that is in subjection to it bound to its claims; *death* alone can abolish this connection. The apostle proves this in verses 2 and 3, by the marriage law, and then applies it in verse 4 to believers. Although the believers from among the nations were never under the letter of the law, yet the principles declared therein, especially in the ten commandments, found their application to them as well, inasmuch as they contained what the righteousness of God can demand of *every man*. But under this law, man can only be lost. It therefore is a solemn and important question for all, How shall I be freed from the law? We cannot, it is true, release ourselves in an illegal way from the dominion of the law given by God. God would never permit this, in that all demands of the law on man are perfectly just. But now God Himself has in Christ provided a righteous way for our perfect deliverance from the law—a way which puts us altogether and for ever out of its reach; and this way is "death." "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ. . . ." (v. 4). Death here is the only means of deliverance, as in the marriage law. We are "become dead to the law by the body of Christ," as we read plainly here, and therefore the law cannot reach us any more. But does not this lower its authority? Not in the least, for we own that Christ has died, and we with Him; and the law cannot be applied any more to a dead person. On the other hand, its authority has been fully administered, because sin has been visited with death. In the death of Christ the authority of the law has been fully exercised and satisfied. Now all who were under the law, and have believed in Jesus, have died under the execution of the judgment of this law; for this judgment on them has taken place in Christ. The law applies to *living* persons only, and not to *dead* ones. A wife becomes an adulteress if she marries another while her husband is still alive; but she is free as soon as her husband is dead.

So is it with the Christian. He cannot belong to two masters at the same time: the law and the risen Christ cannot exercise authority over the soul at the same time. The application of this example is somewhat different for us as regards the form, but the principle remains the same. The *law* has not died, and therefore has not lost its authority; but *we* have died, and because we are dead the law cannot exercise any more power over us, for its rule ceases with death. We have died with Christ, and then are raised with Him, and therefore by death we are separated from the law. Our present husband is the risen Christ. In no way do we stand any longer under the law—be it with regard to its just claims or in its righteous judgments. It exists no longer for us, so to say, or rather, we are no longer here for the law, inasmuch as we are “become dead to the law by the body of Christ.”

But are we now freed from the law to be *lawless*, to do our own will without any responsibility? Or have the righteous demands of God contained in the law lost their value? Neither of the two, for we read in the second half of verse 4, “that ye should be married to another, to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” It is just in connection with the law—in which God demands fruit certainly—that we bring forth fruit unto death only (v. 5); but fully delivered from the law and in relation with Christ, the risen man, we are able “to bring forth fruit unto God.” This is the blessed result for the believer of deliverance from the law. Risen with Christ, he has partaken of a new life, which bears its fruit—a life for which the system of the law exists no longer.

In verse 5 we read—“For when we were in the flesh . . . ;” therefore not “are,” but “were.” Likewise, in chapter viii. 9—“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.” The word “flesh” here signifies, of course, moral flesh only—the whole being, or the entire position of the natural man before God. Man risen with Christ, and therefore renewed man, is no longer in that position before God. Yet, though the flesh is still present with him, he is neither under its dominion, nor does it present his position before God as before. “When we were in the flesh, the passions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.” The passions, which urged on to sin, wrought in the flesh, and through the opposition

of the claims of the law, the will, *i.e.*, sin, which the flesh loved and the law forbade, became the more alive. "But now we are delivered from the law, being dead to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (v. 6).

In Galatians ii. 19 we have the same thing, but differently expressed—"I through the law am dead to the law." The law is the service of death. All who find themselves under it are sentenced to death, because they are sinners. For us, believers, this judgment is executed in the death of Christ. Now I can say, "The law has killed me;" and I can add at once, that through this death I am dead to the law, or I exist no longer for it. The *law* has not been put to death, but *I* have been put to death, and that through its righteous demands. By faith I find in the death of Christ the end of my position, as in the flesh and as under the law before God. But, if I am "planted together in the likeness of his death," then "I shall be also (in the likeness) of his resurrection." As raised with Christ, I am just as little under the law as Christ Himself, who sitteth at the right hand of God. Even so now our *service* is of an altogether different character, as we see in verse 6. It exists no more in the fulfilling of a demand according to the letter, but in the service of the Spirit. As partakers of the nature and life of Christ, we walk in the power of the Spirit of God, in that which is well-pleasing to God. This is not a law, which delivers us unto the curse because of the transgression of its declarations; but we are partakers of *the* righteousness in which Jesus Himself is before God.

Now, if it was impossible to serve God under the law, and fruit was brought forth unto death only; and if one must be entirely separated from the law, be free from its dominion, really to serve God and bear fruit unto Him, how easily could the thought arise, that the law itself is sin, and of an evil tendency! The apostle proceeds to meet this in the following verses. He justifies the law against every accusation, and places its true character, as also the exceeding sinfulness of sin, fully in the light.

It may be well here first to remark, that the apostle uses the little word "I," in order to present his doctrine on this point very clearly and simply. But this has led many undelivered souls to conclude that the apostle speaks of himself here, of his own condition, and therefore of the condition of

every true Christian. But this would not only stand in the grossest contrast to the first half of *this* chapter, but also to chapters vi. and viii. Compare only verse 14 with verses 4 to 6, and chapter vi. 14 and 18 ; also verse 19 with the whole of the sixth chapter, and with chapter viii. 4. The very portion before us proves that the apostle could not be speaking here of himself, For, I ask, at what time was Paul alive without law ? as he says in verse 9. Before his conversion ? Certainly not ; for he himself speaks of himself : "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee" (Phil. iii. 5). He therefore could not say of himself : "For I was alive without the law once," because he was under it from his very youth. He speaks much more here of the condition of man in general. Altogether, in the last half of this chapter, specially from verse 14 onward, he presents the experiences of a man under the law—his condition, his conflicts and his end. Even the natural man can have such experiences, yea, we find similar utterances in the writings of heathen philosophers to those expressed in this portion ; but never will a natural heart be able to say : "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man" (v. 22). This cannot be the language but of a quickened one, whose conscience and will are renewed. Besides, every Christian will experience the same conflicts if he puts himself under the law, though in ignorance, or through want of deliverance. But it is not the intention of the apostle here in the least to present the measure of the spiritual condition of a soul, nor the experiences of a delivered Christian ; but he will simply show what are the experiences and conflicts of a renewed soul, or what its judgment is upon itself when placed under the law.

But it is also well to notice that it is not a question of *grace*, *Christ*, or of the *Holy Spirit* in this part of the chapter ; but of the *law* only, of the *strength of sin*, of the *impotence and corruption of the flesh*, and of the *fruitless efforts of one* in this position. It is not till verse 25 that Christ is introduced, and then as the only place of refuge and safety for the captive under the law of sin and death, as a perfectly satisfying answer to the question : "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?"

Now before we enter upon a closer examination of this part of the chapter in question, I would, for the confirmation

of what has been said before, put the question for calm consideration to every Christian conscience: Had the apostle for himself, or has any other delivered Christian still to sigh and exclaim, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Did Paul still lie captive under the law of sin, and by his conduct bring forth fruit unto death only? Did his salvation and deliverance through Christ still remain in uncertainty, or had he so feebly known the value and bearing of the work of Christ? Did his faith understand so little what the grace and the love of God had given him in Christ Jesus? Did he still go on without the indwelling of the Holy Ghost? Surely a quiet meditation over this question will leave no doubt whatever that the apostle here speaks neither of his own condition nor of that of any other delivered Christian.

But let us now return to verse 7, where the apostle, as stated already, commences to justify the law against every accusation, and to bring the true character of sin to the light. In this verse he declares, first, that by the law comes the knowledge of sin. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not lust." It is by the law then that sin and lust are known in their true character; and it is manifest what both are before God. *Sin* is that evil principle, dwelling and operating in the flesh—a hostile power striving against the law of God. It works just what the law forbids, and that because it does forbid it. *Lust* is the active inclination and desire in the flesh. If the law says, "Thou shalt not lust," then it shows thereby that these desires and inclinations of the heart are evil. But, now, what does sin? It just takes occasion, through the commandment which forbids the desire, to excite these lusts, and at the same time works upon the will, in order that every resistance may cease. This reveals the true character of sin, its hatred and enmity against all that is good. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment,\* wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (v. 8). One might ask, Is it not just the law that produces sin? Oh, no! it was there already, before the law came. "For until the law sin was in the world" (chap. v. 13); but "without the law sin was dead" (v. 8). The law does not produce sin, but puts its true character in the light. It is always

\* Law and commandment are in truth the same, though the former signifies the whole law, and the latter more a distinct demand of the same.

present; but where there is no law its true nature is concealed. But, as soon as the law appears, it rises up and shows what it is in reality—enmity against the law of God. “For I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived” (v. 9). The apostle here simply says that the commandment is that through which sin is revived, which places its real character, in contrast to the law, clearly in the light. We see it already in a child, that at once manifests a strong desire to do it when it is forbidden a certain thing it hitherto has done without an evil thought or particular inclination. By the commandment, sin, which proved to be dead hitherto in this matter, revives in the child and excites it to act against this commandment. Without law it would be impossible for sin to produce such a conflict in the soul, and make us responsible for the sin. As soon as the law declares what sin is, then are we no longer ignorant, and feel our conscience guilty because of the transgression of the law. If any one lives without law, sin is there nevertheless, but it is dead; but, as soon as the commandment comes in, it revives. And what is the consequence? It causes death. “And I died, and the commandment which was (ordained) to life I found to be unto death” (v. 10).

The law says, “Do this, and thou shalt live;” and just this declaration is found for me to be unto death, because it puts the claims of God upon a sinful nature, upon a nature, which by its own will refuses the accomplishment of these demands, and to a conscience which cannot deny the justice of condemnation. Without law one lives in an undisturbed indifference, does one’s own will, and that without knowledge of God, and therefore without knowledge of guilt. But the law steps in, prohibits all that one desires, and one dies under its just sentence. The apostle here presents sin as a surprising enemy. When the law came, sin, in that it knew that the will would resist it, and the conscience pronounce condemnation, made use of this opportunity, and brought man into a condition of rebellion against the law, and killed him by the same. Death was the sentence on God’s part; and for man was the result of this law, which promised life. “For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me” (v. 11). The *commandment*, therefore, did not bring on this *death*, but *sin*. The law certainly pronounced this sentence of death, because of sin; but it

could not do otherwise, because "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (v. 12).

"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (v. 13). Here, then, the apostle puts its real character in the light. By the holy and good law it had occasion to bring me under the just sentence of the same, and thus wrought death in me by that which is good.

Now, after the apostle has cleared the law, and shown it to be good and holy, and that it is not the law but sin that incurs this sentence of death, he describes the condition of man who, with the knowledge of sin that dwells and acts in him, and the just demands of the law, is found under the law. "But I am carnal, sold under sin" (v. 14). This is the sad sentence such a one has to pronounce. Note in this 14th verse the twofold expression:—First, it says, "We know that the law is spiritual." All Christians know this; but then he does not say, "But *we* are carnal," &c., but "I am carnal, sold under sin." Thus man must exclaim, under the law—I am carnal, and the law is spiritual; I am a slave of sin, and the law demands of me to be a slave of righteousness. What principles! And what brings man to this confession is the experiences he makes on his way, which he describes more fully from verse 15 to 23. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate that I do" (v. 15). Though the *conscience* is renewed and acknowledges the good, though it consents unto the law "that it is good" (v. 16), what profit is this acknowledgment and consent unto the good to me if I just do the contrary? Though the *will* is renewed, and perfectly free to do the good, what does it avail, if "to perform that which is good" is wanting? (v. 18). I know that what the law demands is only good, and I know too, that it is just to demand it of me, nor do I wish that these claims be diminished; but I have no power to meet them. It is perfectly true that, if I acknowledge the good, and am also ready to do it, "It is no more I that do the evil, but sin, that dwelleth in me" (v. 17). O what a comfort for me lies in this! This confession just shows the greatness of this slavery in which I find myself. I am such a slave that, though I myself perform no more that which is evil, but sin that dwelleth

in me, yet against my will I must allow myself to be used of it. I acknowledge the badness of sin, and still am in utter subjection to it; I consent unto the good, and yet do not perform it; I hate that which is bad, and yet I do it. Though I would serve God ever so willingly, and use my whole strength to gain this end, yet all my intentions make shipwreck on this irresistible power of sin, which keeps me captive in its chains. Yes, all efforts, though ever so sincere, are useless, and only increase my discomfort. They reveal the more glaringly how hateful sin is, and how entirely I am sold under it; they convince me more and more "that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (v. 18). "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not that I do" (v. 19). There is no power, no accomplishment of the good, and there is therefore also no true peace of soul.

In verses 21, 23, it is the question of various characters of law, of a certain principle, by which the condition of an undelivered soul is still clearer revealed. In verse 22 we have the law of God. The inward or inner man—the renewed conscience and the renewed will—has its delight in this law, and this delight is termed in verse 23 "the law of my mind." It further states in this verse, "I see another law in my members." This law is mentioned already in verse 21, "the law, that evil is present with me." This "law in my members" is opposed to "the law of my mind," and wars against the same; the evil dwelling in me stands in perfect contrast to the delight of the inner man. Still there is yet another law in my members, namely, "the law of sin," as we see in verse 23—the hostile principle acting in my flesh, under whose dominion I am brought by the evil that is dwelling in me, "which wars against the law of my mind." Thus, then, are all my actions, yea, my whole person, in entire subjection to sin. I may groan, strive, struggle, wrestle—all is of no avail; I must submit myself, I must obey a power whose abominable character is clearly before mine eyes, whose badness before God is fully known to me. I may do what I like: all is without fruit. I am sold as a slave under sin, and there is no man that can deliver me, because they all are slaves, just as I am; superhuman, divine power is necessary to burst the iron chains and fetters, to keep off the thunders and lightnings of Sinai. My hope for salvation is vanished. I am entirely lost, corrupt, altogether ungodly.

“O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” (verse 24).

This is the end of the conflict against sin. Man is conquered ; sin remains victor ; man is a slave ; sin retains the dominion. Who shall deliver me ? is the outcry of the deeply-felt weakness, which is experienced more and more during the conflict, and finally revealed under entire helplessness. Self-righteousness is thrown to the ground, and man formerly in eager combat has surrendered his weapons, because he is convinced of the impossibility of acquiring a holiness in the flesh, a righteousness by works. Pride is humbled ; the power of self destroyed ; the will is broken ; and God, who has used all these efforts of self-righteousness to convince the soul of its incompetency, hears at last those acceptable words for His ear : “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” But no sooner has He heard this cry, than He lets the full comfort of His gospel stream into the heart groaning under the yoke of sin. He unfolds before the eyes of the disconsolate and hopeless slave, the glorious and unspeakable blessings of an eternal deliverance, attained by the death and resurrection of Christ, and by Himself sealed with the pledge of His Spirit. The chains and fetters are burst, judgment and condemnation for ever gone, and the sinner—until now sighing deeply and almost in despair—lifts up his head exultingly to heaven, and triumphs in the knowledge of an eternal liberty : “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord !” He has redeemed me ! He has made me free—free from the law of sin and death. He has conquered for ever, and in Him I am more than conqueror.

Thus, then, we have found three things in the clear and simple instruction of this chapter. First, *Deliverance from law through death* (verse 1 to 6) ; then, *the knowledge of sin through the law* (verse 7 to 13) ; and lastly, *the condition of a soul, though renewed in conscience and will, under the power of sin and the law* (verse 14 to 24).

Before we now pass on to the consideration of chap. viii., we desire to make a short remark on the last half of ver. 25. This part of the verse has already perplexed many a reader, both as regards its contents, as also the place, which the Holy Ghost has assigned to it, in that it suddenly crosses the stream of thought as it were. The first shout of deliverance, viz., “I thank God through Jesus Christ,” is interrupted by

the words : " So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin," before the apostle continues more clearly to prove this deliverance and to unfold it in its entire bearing.

Now, will the apostle express the condition of the undelivered, or of the delivered soul, with these words ? Or will he express the change from one condition into another ? Neither one nor the other. These words rather present a simple principle in order to bring both the true character of the mind, as well as that of the flesh, clearly to the light. The apostle, in the last half of this chapter, has unfolded this principle in connection with an undelivered condition ; a condition under the law the result was, hopeless captivity. If now the same principle is repeated here in the last half of verse 25, then it is done to unfold it in chapter viii. in connection with the condition of a delivered soul, which through the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus is made free from the law of sin and death, and to bring the opposite result to the light. The nature, or the character of the mind, as well as that of the flesh have in nowise been changed through the deliverance in Christ ; but, nevertheless, the result as regards service, or conduct, is altogether different, as we shall see most distinctly. Under the law I could not follow my mind and serve God, but had to obey the flesh and be a slave of sin ; but in Christ Jesus, made free from the law of sin and death, I am able to serve God, and to keep the flesh in subjection, though its nature remains unchanged.

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## THE LORD'S HOST.

### THE SEAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

#### CHAPTER III.

ON receiving the forgiveness of our sins, there results a most important matter for our souls. I allude to the sealing of the Spirit of God. The sealing of the Spirit takes place *at once* when we receive this forgiveness—when we believe in Christ. This is quite different from the work of quickening, which makes us see our need of forgiveness. It is the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our bodies. This truth comes out very blessedly in the type of " the things which happened " to Israel. The moment the blood had

met God's claims, the pillar of cloud and of fire descended. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus xiii. 21, 22).

It was blessed to be *safe* from a God of judgment on the night of the passover. But God was outside, and the Israelite was within: there was no communion between them. They could have no thoughts in common with One who was judging. To keep Him outside the house was the thought of that solemn night. But now He comes down at once to take His place amongst the people whom blood has sheltered. *Forgiveness* was known, but *deliverance* was not; still the conscience was clear with God, and in virtue of this the cloud descended *before* they were out of Egypt.

A soul may know no other truth than the simple but blessed fact of the forgiveness of his sins. Never mind; the rest will come! God seals him. While Peter yet spake these words—"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43)—here were quickened people, needing forgiveness, listening; there was Peter declaring forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in virtue of His work—needy hearts accepted the message; it was this they wanted, and at once, as the words entered their hearts, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." No doubt He had been at work in quickening them *before* Peter's visit. He had created desires and the need of forgiveness which Christ alone could satisfy, but now He comes with the message of forgiveness, and they believe; consequently He takes up His abode in the bodies of those who believed in this message of pardon. This was the *gift* of the Holy Ghost; quite distinct from the *gifts* which, to mark His presence in the sight of others, were also seen at that day.

This makes the sealing of the Holy Ghost very plain. So it was understood by Peter, and taught by Paul. Peter tells them in Acts ii. 38 that, on the *remission of sins*, they would receive the Holy Ghost. Paul so teaches in the Epistle to the Romans. The blood of Christ having been shed (*ch.* iii. 25); and the ungodly sinner having believed on Him that justifieth the ungodly (*ch.* iv. 5), and who raised

up Jesus from the dead, who had been delivered for our offences (*ch.* iv. 24); "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (at once) by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (*ch.* v. 5). All this is before deliverance is known (*chs.* vi. vii.) from their *state* as sinners before God.

Thus, the reception of the Holy Ghost is a positive result on our believing in Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. Much has to be learned doubtless, but the result is plain—the Holy Ghost dwells in us as a consequence, and as a seal; "Having believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. i. 13).

The tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews also shows us this truth. The moment the work of Christ is accomplished, the Holy Ghost descends that we may know the forgiveness of our sins. "Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us . . . . and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. x. 14-17). Here it is not the witness of the Holy Ghost *in us*, which is spoken of, but that *to us*. He comes to dwell in the Church, and to tell us not only that Christ had purged our sins before He went on high, but to bring to us the testimony, that we may have our consciences purged, and that God will remember our sins no more! He will not be untrue to His own Word; nor to Him whose precious blood has been shed; nor to His Spirit's testimony to us. Thus we have the (unasked) presence of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the putting away of our sins through the blood-shedding of Christ; as Israel had the cloud and the glory (unsought), consequent on the blood-shedding of the paschal lamb. It was as if God desired to be with His people at once; so the moment He could righteously come down to dwell amongst them, He did so.

## ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

### CHAPTERS V., VI.

I THEN find the objective measure of this in Chap. v., "Be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love;" after that I find that we *are* all light in the Lord. I have the imitation of God the measure of my conduct. I say, How can I go and imitate God? Is not Christ, God? Then I am to go and imitate Him as He walked down here.

"You were sometimes darkness, but now you are light in

the Lord (v. 8.) The worldly Christian is like one dead, because he is asleep. You may show him ever so much and he heeds it not at all—yet he is alive. (V. 14.)—"Awake thou that sleepest and Christ shall give thee light." Christ is the expression of my walk in love and light, and that is the path of a Christian.

It shows what is the immense practical importance of this totally new thing. It is God who is the measure and pattern of my walk. Christ was the expression of divine grace and divine light. While He was in the world He was the light of the world. So am I to be.

The law gave us what we ought to be for God. This is what God was for man in Christ, and that is my path and pattern.

Take love, what is the legal rule? It is you should love your neighbour as yourself. Did Christ do only that? He gave Himself for His neighbour. The Christian gets a love which gives up self totally for other persons. The law knows nothing about that. That I have never found elsewhere, and shall not find in Heaven—perfect good in the midst of evil. The law is a perfect rule of what man *ought* to be for God. But Christ is what God is for man. We shall not be doing things contrary to the other (the law) if we follow Him. It is "having put off," not "that ye put off."

(V. 2.) You get a detail very beautiful to me. "Walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." I get Him giving Himself *for* us and giving Himself *to* God. I can have love up, and I can have love down. God loves down, man (with God) loves up. If it is loving up, the higher the object the greater the affection. If it is loving down, the lower the object the greater the love. Our love is exercised on God, while His love is exercised on these poor wretched creatures. We see in Christ what was perfect in both respects. He gave Himself for us, which was the Divine looking down, and to God which was man looking up—God in man perfect in both.

Another similar thing. We are light in the Lord, because my new nature is light in the Lord. But it is not said we are love in the Lord, because love is free and sovereign and only God has got it.

There are two other subjects. One is Christ's present love to the Church in a double aspect.

1st. The broad truth. He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it—you have His mind and action toward the Church. He is going to “present it to himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” Then you have His present nurture of it, like as a man loves his body (v. 25, 26). His present loving, constant care, that is what a man does for his own flesh.

2nd. The other side is that we are fighting with the Devil, and we want all the armour of God, and you have a most instructive description of what the armour is. One is most lovely and blessed—the care of Christ; the other most important—the necessity of the armour.

You notice all defensive armour comes before offensive. You do not take the sword of the Spirit till you are guaranteed against all the power of Satan. The sword may be to parry with as well as to thrust with doubtless.

“The loins girt about with truth.” It is not a loosely letting go what you have.

You do not fight in the wilderness, you fight in Canaan. You only go through the wilderness, and have to make good your way.

“Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” It is the spirit of peace in one’s walk. I carry peace in my heart—it is a great thing. Your feet shod—it is your walk. You cannot carry peace to others unless you have it yourself. Then love flows freely if I have that.

We have first the truth applied to keep the moral man in order, then the breastplate of (practical) righteousness applied to protect the man.

Then I have the shield of faith up; and that gives him confidence. With the helmet of salvation he can walk with his head up and carry himself free. Then he takes the sword, *as* the sword of the Spirit, and then he is thrown back after all, on entire dependence; prayer and supplication follow, by which he can walk and go on.

NOTE.—The time was short, the last chapters were only briefly glanced at.

## LEAH'S SONS.

GEN. xxix. 31-35.

ISRAEL, who were not only the sheep of His pasture, but the betrothed of Jehovah ("Thy maker is thine husband"), fair through the comeliness that He had put upon her, proves herself barren and without fruit to God, and is practically set aside: "Lo ammi" written upon her. This is typified in Rachel.

Leah the hated one—figure of the Church in its aspect of being gathered from among the Gentiles—is then brought into blessing and fruitfulness; her reproach is taken away, and she who had not obtained mercy, now has obtained mercy, so to speak; and the result in the names of her children tells its own tale of sovereign grace.

Her firstborn brings out an entirely new thing in God's dealings. Reuben—"See" or "Behold a son." The day of bondage is now passed; the servants are no more to possess the house. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." The servants slew the heir, and now the son had come in and given the freedom of the house, and the title and privilege of sons, to all who received Him; so that we have no longer "the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption" is ours, whereby we cry "Abba, Father." Your place and mine, beloved—for the "fulness of time" has come. God has sent forth His Son, and we are no more servants but sons; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

How sweetly does her next son carry on the story of grace, and tell us how we are brought into this privileged place! Conceiving again, she bare another son, and called his name "Simeon"—"Hearing"; and so the apostle asks, Was it by works of law or by the hearing of faith, that ye received the Spirit? By the "hearing of faith," surely; so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by God's word. "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life." Simeon typifies God's principle of action in this present dispensation—grace by the hearing of faith—for it is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us."

Leah conceived again, and bare another son, and called his name "Levi"—"Joined"—for she said, "Now will my

husband be joined unto me." He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit—bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. We are severed from our connections with the first man, and united to a risen Christ in glory : made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; old things have passed away, all things are become new. We are of the new creation—vitally and eternally connected with the second Man, the Lord from heaven, a union now the portion of all God's children, to be known and enjoyed as their proper privilege.

How fitly does her next born son, the fourth (completing the perfect fruit of God's grace), bear the name of "Judah"—"Praise"! It is our joy and privilege, as those who are sons of God, by pure sovereign grace—once afar off, now made nigh—to offer up "the sacrifice of praise to God continually"—"that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." Yea, it is meet that we should praise the Lord, and call upon all that is within us to bless His holy name, since He has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. In seeking worshippers to worship Him in spirit and in truth, He has sought and found us ; let us then not forget that this is our holy privileged occupation. For if in Levi we get the priesthood, and we are—though after another order—a holy priesthood, to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, still more, we are a royal priesthood (for we are of Judah), and the kingdom is ours in joint-heirship with Christ. He that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, hath made us a kingdom, even priests unto God and His father.

May we not then exclaim, as we enter into the blessed fact that we are sons—and sons by pure grace—in union with a risen Christ, privileged to praise our God as we wait for the kingdom to be manifested : "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out, for of him and to him and through him are all things, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen!"

H. N.

## SIN PUT AWAY.

"I RECEIVED the gospel as Christ gave it, simply to my heart, from Him who taught me that He had 'put away sin' by the sacrifice of Himself. I saw that all my seeking to serve God and be acceptable to Him, without knowing how to submit myself to the righteousness of God's own providing, and take my own proper position in His sight, had been futile for my life past. . . . I now have seen for some months past, that when a man is in Christ, he is a new creature—old things having passed away, and that all things are become new, both things of the world and things of religion—and, thanks be to Him who has called me, I now live by the faith of the Son of God."

Such, dear reader, was the simple and truthful confession a truly converted soul was enabled to make by the reception into the heart of the truth of God concerning sin and the sinner, and the way in which His inflexible holiness, righteousness, and hatred of sin are upheld, that He still may be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus (Rom. iii. 26). Just as you are, without one motion or thought of yours or your doings, you may make the same; for if you think these necessary, you are still ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish your own; in a word, you "have not submitted yourself to the righteousness of God." The blessed truth that God has recorded of His Son, is indeed that "He appeared to PUT AWAY SIN, by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26); and this is why God can now take you, a hell-deserving and lost sinner, just as you are, and make you, through believing on Jesus, fit for His own holy presence, where no sin can enter. Is it not a wondrous truth? Yet it is God's. As it was of old at those momentous periods of Israel's history—the great days of atonement—once a year (read Leviticus xvi) the two goats were taken, one was killed, and the blood brought into the presence of God, as the token that life was taken, and blood shed; the live one was brought to Aaron the High Priest, and he laid his hands on its head, and confessed *all the iniquities* of the children of Israel, and it was then sent into the *wilderness—a land not inhabited*—perfect type of the place the sins of every believer are gone from the sight of God, as well as from His remembrance, by the death of Jesus. "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and carried

them away to the land of God's forgetfulness ; and there, in that uninhabited place, He left them all—*past, present, and future*, as men say. Yes, sin in the flesh—the deep-rooted born sin that we only see the *fruit* of ; and in token that He has done so, God has raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavens. Yes, He stood as our substitute—the great antitype of Israel's scapegoat. Willingly did He bleed, and suffer, and die, that we might inherit blessing, glory, and life eternal by Him and His work. How happy the Israelites were when the messenger returned, after leaving the sin-bearing goat in the far-off and uninhabited land ! and such may be your portion, dear reader, if you trust in Jesus ; joy in your heart may be yours, to know by faith that your sins are put for ever out of God's sight and remembrance.

This was the portion of the believing few who first saw Him when He returned from the grave, after He had borne all our sins. "He shewed unto them his hands and his side : then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord" (John xx. 20). *Such is the truth for you to rest in*, dear reader. And should a doubt arise in the heart that it was only to the few there that He spoke, He adds, "Blessed are they that have *not seen and yet have believed*" (John xx. 29). If such is your glorious portion, dear reader, believe what God says, that if you are looking and waiting for Jesus, "He shall appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). And now, dear friend, have you submitted to God ? Believe me, it is with all earnest affection for your soul I put the question, Are you enabled to utter with your heart the simple and truthful confession at the head of this little paper ?

It was my privilege to get such a one from a soul. Oh ! if you are not able to subscribe to it with all your heart, may the Lord, in His grace, awaken you to your awful state by nature. Give up striving to prove that there is something good in yourself in thought, word, or deed, for God has pronounced that you are "dead in trespasses and sins," but that He, in His grace, is ready to save you, just as you are, if you will but submit to His righteousness, which is not some great thing impossible for you to do, but "That if thou shalt confess, with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, **THOU SHALT BE SAVED**" (Rom. x. 9). Yes, that is

submitting to God, acknowledging that you can do nothing yourself, but are a lost sinner. Then He saves you Himself of His own free and sovereign grace. May God give you to be able to confess and believe, to the salvation and peace of your soul, by the Holy Ghost, for Christ's sake. Amen.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

### A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION, CONFLICT, HOPE.

#### CHAPTER IV.—REDEMPTION.

To possess the forgiveness of his sins is the portion of every child of God. An unforgiven child of God is unknown in Scripture. False theology may, and has darkened the souls of His people; or they may never have known the light. Still forgiveness is their portion, and they *are* forgiven whether they know it or not; but God would have them *know* it as well, and when they receive forgiveness, He gives them the Holy Ghost. It is no matter of attainment, but of simple faith; taking God's thoughts and giving up our own. "Abraham believed God;" that was faith. Experience will often contradict what God says, but faith is not experience, and we are saved by faith and not by experience. "The full assurance of faith" is the only normal Christian state. It rests upon what Christ has accomplished, and upon what the Holy Ghost declares in the Word of God. Unbelief may reject it and be lost; but faith—child-like, Christian faith—believes God; it "sets to its seal that God is true," and God sets His seal (the Holy Ghost) on him who believes.

But to know forgiveness is not to know redemption. A man may know his sins are forgiven for which he would have been judged, and in conscience still be in Egypt. He may think himself "a sinner" merely, still. He may suppose he is still a child of fallen Adam, and thus he may have no sense of deliverance from that state at all. Now it is one thing to know that I had sins, and that I had earned judgment for those sins, and that grace stepped in and sheltered me by the blood of Christ, both blotting out the sins for ever, and delivering me from a judgment to come; but it is quite another thing to know that I have been wholly delivered from a present *state* before God—that of a respon-

sible and sinful child of Adam, and that I am now a forgiven child of God, and never can be a child of Adam again!

Here the truth of redemption comes in, and we have both. "We have (both) redemption through his blood, (and) the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. i. 7).

It was one thing for Israel to know that they had been *safe* from judgment on the night of the Passover, and quite another to have been *saved* out of Egypt. They *had been* slaves there, making bricks without straw. They *are* God's freed men, as they sing the song of Moses on the wilderness side of the Red Sea! Here is where so many err. They are trusting in Christ as their only hope; they may know too that their sins are pardoned, but they go on all their lives through, perhaps, crying out "miserable sinners" or "sinners." Plainly they do not know redemption, or this they could not do.

Suppose that an Israelite, instead of singing Moses' song of redemption, was crying out, because he found himself the same person still, "I am a poor slave in Egypt," what would you have thought of his folly? Yet there are plenty of the people of God in no better state. How thoroughly dishonouring to the work of Christ! But it satisfies systematic religion, and ministers to it. Redemption is ignored in its true force; I do not say in words, for, alas! that is one of the most successful plans of the enemy, to use orthodox words without their true import, and thus blind the souls of the people of God as to their real meaning, keeping them in darkness and uncertainty all their lives.

An Israelite who was redeemed was dealt with from that moment on an entirely new footing—never as a slave in Egypt again; but according to the new place and relationship in which he now stood with God, and so it is with the Christian.\*

\* Here I may remark that we must not confuse two thoughts that are quite distinct in Scripture. I refer to Redemption and Purchase. Christ is the "Head of every man"—even the heathen. Every man must be presented to Him in grace now, or in judgment by-and-by, because of the rights He has over all men by purchase. This is alluded to in 2 Peter ii. 1, and in Jude, where it speaks of those who profess His name, denying the Master who had *bought* them; but it is not said that He *redeemed* them. In the parable of the Treasure, in Mat. xiii., you have the man buying (*ἀγοράζω* fr. *ἀγορά*—the market-place) the *field* (the world), in order to obtain the treasure which he had found in it. He purchases the whole inheritance, the world

And now comes another thing altogether: not merely have we to learn what we have *done*, and the *forgiveness* we need for this; but we have to learn a far more trying lesson—what we *are*, and the *deliverance* we have in Christ. We never obtain the sense of thorough deliverance from what we are, until we are forced to cry out, “O wretched man that *I am*, who shall *deliver me*?” Forgiveness may be known in measure, at the same time, as we have seen.

This is unfolded in Exodus xiv. They started to leave Egypt, but the bitter lesson was then learned that they could not deliver themselves. Forgiveness does not give strength, nor does the possession of life. And here comes in *experience*; but experience before deliverance, and therefore not experience on proper Christian ground yet.\* Experience will never give deliverance; it will “bring me into captivity,” but it will never set me free (see Rom. vii. 14—24); that is the work of another.

and all that is therein; but He redeems His people (*ἀπολύω*, *fr.* λύω, to loose). Buying them makes them your slaves; redeeming them is setting them free! It is never said that He redeemed all men; it is said that He bought them; and therefore He has, on this ground, although not on this only, indefeasible rights over all men. A Christian is both purchased and redeemed. Made free by redemption from Satan and the consequences of his sins, he is Christ's by purchase—he is “bought with a price,” and therefore is “not his own,” but the possession of Him who has purchased him.

\* I would here notice the significant typical import of the fact stated in Exod. xiii. 18. The people went up as far as Etham by *five* in a rank. (Marg.) Now five, in the typical use of the number, means weakness—it is “relatively small.” “Five thousand of you shall flee at the rebuke of five,” &c. Here it was God's ordering that they should go out by five in a rank from Egypt; while on their side man's weakness must feel that it cannot deliver itself. Satan's power is typified by six, or its multiples: and “six hundred chosen chariots” of Pharaoh (ch. xiv. 7) pursued them to hinder their escape from his hand. This is the more striking if we compare it with the fact that they crossed the Jordan afterwards by five in a rank (see Jos. i. 14; iv. 12). The beginning of the picture shows man's effort in his own strength which is only weakness to leave the territory, and deliver himself from the thralldom, of Satan; this he finds by bitter experience that he is unable to do, and that he must be delivered by another. The other end of the picture shows us that it is only man in weakness who is permitted to pass through, and man's weakness which God will use on the new ground of practice in the heavenly warfare, so that when he is weak then he is strong. They must by God's ordering leave Egypt by five in a rank, as afterwards they must also by His ordering, in the same way pass over Jordan, to meet the Canaanite on the other side.

On the night of the Passover it was a question between God and Israel: on the day of the Red Sea, between God and the enemy. Was God or the enemy to have those whom blood had purchased? In the salvation of the Red Sea we learn in type the efficacy of Christ's *death* and *resurrection* in delivering from the world, and Satan's power who had formed it as a sphere in which to please the flesh in man. The *blood* of Jesus answered for our sins before God as a Judge. His death and resurrection takes us clean out by redemption into a new place; delivering us for ever from the attacks and accusations of the enemy. God counts to us in grace, and we possess by faith, the efficacy of what Christ has passed through for us.

The children of Israel had encamped at Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea. Pi-hahiroth bears the significant meaning of "*The opening of liberty*." Here Satan's power is put forth in a final effort to frustrate "The salvation of the Lord." All his hosts are marshalled against the people, who are "sore afraid." But the Lord permits this pressure which eventuates in their learning Him in a far more blessed way than as a Judge. They experience what souls do who find that a day of quiet slavery to Satan was more easy to be endured than the pressure of his power against them, in their first efforts to escape. They may have dreamed of escape in days gone by; but now the trial comes. Will Satan permit it? The bondage of the Egyptians was preferable to this trying moment: "For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (v. 12). Death was before them, and up to death Satan wields his power. Once death is past, Satan's power is over.

Now God's resources are seen; the blood which had answered for our sins has come from the side of a dead Christ; but He has risen, and left the whole domain of Satan's power—nullifying death for him who believes. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (vv. 13, 14). And Moses lifted up the rod of judgment, and divided the waters of death; and the people passed over to the other side through death, which stood before them a moment before. The Lord has gone into the last stronghold of Satan's power, and wrought complete salvation *for* His people. A very real work may have to be

done *in* them, that they may know themselves, and that when put into the pressure of such a moment they may be forced to find that all must be of God. But the Lord has wrought the work of salvation *for* us; and what He has passed through is counted to us in grace. It is not merely that His blood has cleansed us from every sin and saved us from judgment to come; but He has died and risen, and left the whole sphere into which He entered; we have died also to the sin and sinful state for and to which He died in ending it before God; and now He liveth unto God. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also (*i.e.*, count it true in faith, what God has counted to you in grace) yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 9—11).

How then can Satan touch or accuse? If we have died with Christ out of the scene into which He entered in divine love, we have died to it for ever. Satan may try to follow (as Pharaoh and his hosts), and find that there is his ruin. He put forth his worst, in leading on the whole world against Christ to drive Him out of it; but therein Christ destroyed his power. His accusations are over; his attacks frustrated. He might accuse and attack one who is alive; but we have died with Christ, and this he can do no more.

If we were simple, this truth of deliverance would be simple too. But alas, we are not simple, and hence the bitter experiences we have to pass through, till we cry out, "Who shall deliver?" Then all is clear. We have been translated completely out of the place and condition in which we committed the sins, and as cleansed from them, put into a new place "in Christ" risen from the dead. By no efforts of our own could we ever reach this place. It is by complete surrender, and by giving up every effort that we obtain this deliverance in Christ, who has accomplished it all, and who now stands in this new place Himself.

You find this experimentally described at length in Rom. vii. 14—24. Not that these verses give you the experience of any person at the time they were spoken. They are the *past* experiences of a *delivered* man, who had struggled for freedom until he found he was rather getting further from *deliverance* than nearer the goal. He is now standing on

dry ground, so to speak, and describing what he experienced before he was free.

You see a remarkable illustration of this in Jonah (ch. ii.). He is put into the place where none could deliver him but God alone—in the “belly of hell”—as he describes it. Three times over he promised what he would do, if he only could get out; but no! “I will look again toward thy holy temple.” No; vows and resolutions will not do. “But,” he cries, “I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of thanksgiving.” Will this set him free? No. Again he cries, “I will pay that I have vowed.” All in vain! Promises and vows, efforts and resolves which are made in such a state will not do; they all come from “I,” and as long as “I” is recognised you have not given up “I” as one in whose flesh “dwelleth no good thing,” and turned the eye away to Christ alone.

“Well,” said Jonah, “*Salvation is of the Lord!*” Ah, Jonah, you have found out the secret; you have touched the spring of the lock, and you are standing on dry ground the next moment! How simple, and yet how blessed to have the eye removed from self—hopeless self—and turned in the sense of utter, helpless weakness upon Christ. Then all is done, and we are free!

In passing I may remark that there are three steps learned in the bitter experience of this chapter (Rom. vii. 14-24). First, the hopeless evil of the nature of the flesh, in which is *no* good: not merely that the tree has produced evil *fruit*, but that the *tree* itself is corrupt. Then, secondly, it begins to dawn upon the soul that, after all, there are good desires, and earnest longings to do the right thing for God. The very aspirations of a new nature, which is sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ, are there. The first cry of the quickened soul is “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” But oh, what distress of soul, to find that even with good desires and earnest aspirations after God, the evil nature is stronger than the good, and leads me captive, so that I do the thing I hate; and I detest and abhor the thing I do! Bitter lesson; but useful to learn. Lastly, then, I learn that I have no power over it, and some one else must step in and set me free. Sad enough to find its total evil; sadder still to find that it is not myself, and yet I am captive to its desires. But the moment I give “I” up, and cry “Who will deliver?” my eye has turned away from all the efforts

of "I," and at once I am free. The Lord has been there in the depths, and the evil nature has been completely condemned in Him, so that I can reckon myself dead by *faith* and for deliverance; though in *fact* and *experience*, I find the nature alive, and its tendencies unchanged, but am entitled to treat it as "not I," but an enemy to overcome and subdue.

Thus we are "in Christ"—not "in Adam" at all, and *now*, for the *first* time, God will have fruit from us. All this work of redemption (Ex. xii-xiv.) is what God has done *for* us. The experience we pass through is a work *in* us, that we may enter upon what He has accomplished. Now, for the first time, the mouths of those who in solemn silence ate the paschal lamb on the night of judgment; whose cries of fear had been silenced at the Red Sea by a God of salvation, are opened in a rich song of praise for what the Lord has accomplished in His delivering grace.

Thus *sins*, and *death*, and *judgment*, are all behind the delivered soul. The sins are gone—for Christ has borne them. Death is past for us in Him. Through it we pass (if we have to die physically) into the presence of the Lord, and "death is ours"—not now the wages of sin; but Christ having taken its wages, we are free, and instead of sinful man's portion, "after this (death) the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27); it leads us to the glory where Jesus is. Judgment is past, for He has borne the wrath, and he that believeth "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John v. 24).

And "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them." "Thus the Lord saved Israel" (vv. 28-30). The same waters that silenced the foe, flowed back into their mighty channel; there was no retrogression—no return. Redemption once accomplished is accomplished for ever! The waters, flowing back in the channel, precluded the possibility of returning by that path into the land of slavery and sin!

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## FRAGMENT.

THERE was a time when there was no scripture but the Word; now there is no word apart from Scripture.

## "GRACE" WITH "SALT."

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Our words should be "always with grace," and prove themselves such by ministering good to the souls of others, "grace to the hearer." This, however, will be oftentimes in the pungency of admonition or rebuke, and at times with severity or decision, or even with indignation and zeal. In this character they will be "seasoned with salt." And having these fine qualities, being thus gracious and yet salted, they will be such as will bear their own virtues, that we have known how to answer every man.

The Lord Jesus, among all others, illustrated this form of moral perfection. He knew how to answer every man with words which always were with grace, or to the soul's profit, but at times seasoned, or seasoned highly, with salt.

In answering enquiries He did not so much aim at satisfying *them*, as at reaching the conscience or the condition of *those who put them*.

In His silence, as well as in His words, when He had to stand before the Jew or the Gentile at the last, before either the Priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace full moral beauty and perfection, witnessing that at least One among the sons of men knew "when to keep silence and when to speak."

Great variety in His style presents itself to us in all this. Sometimes He is gentle, sometimes peremptory, sometimes He reasons, sometimes He rebukes at once, and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of awful condemnation and judgment.

He knows the *moral* of the scene before Him. "By Him actions were weighed" in their value as before God; and His words as well as His doings answer them accordingly.

Matthew xv. has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection is specially shown us. In the course of the action there, the Lord is called to answer Pharisees, the multitude, Peter, Syrophenician, and the disciples again and again in their mistake, and stupidity, and selfishness; and His tone of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of deep, wise, and gracious training of the soul, are all precious and admirable in their place and occasion.

And, let me ask, is there not a fitness in its not being said

of the Lord in Luke ii. that He was either teaching or learning, though it is said that He was hearing and asking questions? It seems to me that there is. To *have taught* would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders; to have *learned*, would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and brighter light which He knew He carried in Himself; for, "He was wiser than his teachers, and had more understanding than the ancients," we may surely say of Him, I mean not as God, but as One "filled with wisdom," as it is said of Him.

But here again we get *the grace* of which that Scripture—"Let your speech be always with grace"—speaks. For of this child, in the Temple with the Doctors, we read that He was "strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." So that He knew how in perfection of grace to use the fulness of wisdom that was in Him, and He is, therefore, not presented to us as either teaching or learning.

Elihu comes to remembrance here. Elihu was silent while years were before him, and while multitude of days was speaking; but he knew that he had the Spirit of God, and the rights of the Spirit he must assert, though otherwise he would have been silent to the end.

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## MEDITATIONS ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

### CH. II.

BUT the great subject of which we have spoken, now comes before our view: the immense fact of the coming of the Holy Spirit to dwell with the disciples of Jesus, in each, and in the midst of all together. Thus in 1 Cor. iii. 16, the Church, as a universal assembly, is the temple of God; and then in 1 Cor. vi. 19, the body of the believer is the temple of God. All those who, attached to Jesus, were in the habit of being gathered together, were, on the day of Pentecost, so gathered. We have already seen (ch. i. 14) that they continued in supplication while they were waiting for the promised Comforter according to Jesus' word.

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, as the cloud filled the tabernacle, so that the priests

could not enter into it (comp. Exod. xl. 35, 1 Ki. viii. 11). But now men themselves form the tabernacle, where God does not disdain to dwell. The blood of Jesus has purified them, and made them fit to be the habitation of God by the Spirit (*ἐν πνεύματι*). Eph. ii. 22. Marvellous truth, fruit of accomplished redemption, and the blessed knowledge of this, that a man—much more than a man—is seated at the right hand of God (John vii. 39). But how beautiful is this truth, this divine fact. Such is the effect of the death and of the blood of Christ, and of our reconciliation and purification through Him—that, instead of driving away the priests by His presence, God makes of us His habitation in grace. What a contrast between the law and the gospel!

But we further find in this fact a marvellous testimony of the grace of God. The presence of the Holy Spirit was dependent on this that the man Jesus was seated at the right hand of God, proof and fruit of the accomplishment of the work of redemption. Now this could not be limited to the Jewish people. This presence of the Spirit was in itself a testimony of fulfilment of this, and the earnest of our inheritance, Christ having died for all and ascended into the glory, the gospel of His glory must be proclaimed to all. For the moment the patience of God fulfilled the work of grace amongst the Jews—the people of the promises; but the gospel which was preached was for the whole world.

When the judgment of God fell on men at the tower of Babel, it scattered them, confounding their language; then He called out Abraham, separating him from his country and from his family, in order to have a race, and then a people for Himself. For many years God bore with the iniquity and unbelief of the people, sending prophets, “till there was no remedy” (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). Last of all He sent His son, and Him as we know they refused and crucified. Then the nation is set aside until by the sovereign grace of God, His Church, the fulness of the Gentiles, is gathered; then He commences anew with the people on the ground of the new covenant and of the presence of the Messiah on earth.

Meanwhile He is gathering the co-heirs of Christ, the heavenly assembly. Thus, though for a moment the Spirit had wrought in the midst of the Jews, spared as a nation by the intercession of Christ on the cross, until they would

have rejected a glorified Christ in the same way they had put to death Christ come in humiliation ; and likewise to gather out all those from amongst them who had ears to hear—is shewn by the Spirit, that the God of grace was to go beyond the limits of the chosen people, and to overreach the judgment of Babel, speaking to all peoples, each in their tongue. Most beautiful testimony of grace towards the world !

The barriers remain, but God surmounts them ; He passes over all to announce the grace of the Saviour, and the salvation of the whole world. We see too this special gift each time God interferes anew, as in Samaria, and in the house of Cornelius. In fact, it was not possible that a glorified Saviour could be only the Jewish Saviour. The history of this people, when they had rejected the Saviour, had ended, except for grace ; and God's eternal redemption could not be for the Jews alone.

The character which the Holy Spirit visibly takes corresponds to this work. When He descended upon Christ, the Spirit was like a dove ; symbol of the sweetness and gentle rest that are found in Him, of whom it is written : “He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory ” (Matt. xii. 19-20). But to the disciples, it is said : “What I tell you in darkness, that speak you in light : and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops !” (Matt. x. 27.)

The Spirit then comes as a rushing mighty wind, filling all the house, and like cloven tongues of fire. The division of the tongues symbolized the various languages ; the fire, the piercing power of the Word of God, discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It seems to us that not only the apostles, but all the 120 were invested with this power ; they were all together, and the explanation of the prophecy of Joel given by Peter confirms the fact (see ch. i. 14, 15 ; ii. 1, 17). They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and commenced to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were at Jerusalem men from all countries, and the rumour of what had happened brought them together. This vast crowd was astonished at hearing each speak in his own tongue, saying one to another, “Are not all these which speak Galileans ? and how hear

we every man in our own tongue, &c.?" They were in doubt, saying "What does this mean?" Others, mocking, said, "These men are full of new wine." These were specially the Jews, ever prone to unbelief.

Peter replies, speaking plainly to them in their mother tongue, and makes them understand that this was what Joel had spoken, announcing what was to take place in the last days. One gathers from Joel, I doubt not, that the Holy Spirit will be poured out afresh when Israel will be re-established in their own country. The latter rain will then be. It must be remarked that ver. 30 of ch. ii. of Joel comes before what precedes. These things happen before the dreadful day of the Lord comes, but the blessings are after that day. Peter speaks in a general way of "the last days," and speaks of the judgment as yet to come, as was in fact the case.

But what is important in his discourse, is the presentation to the consciences of the Jews of their actual position. Because, whatever grace there be, God is always clear and distinct in the declaration and exposing of sins, where grace works. In fine, such was their position; they had rejected and crucified Him whom God had seated at His right hand, His own Son. They had put Him to death and God had raised Him again on high, that He might be proved such according to the power manifested in His works. Horrible position! and we say it, not only of the Jews, but of men. Their Messiah, foundation of all their hopes, rejected; the Son of God put to death—a breach between them and God that seemed irreparable, and on man's side in fact was irreparable.

All was lost, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and men had refused Him. Sin was there, transgression of the law had been there already; God had come in grace, and man would not have Him. Now He was gone into heaven; but blessed be His name for ever, His counsels were not frustrated. Very far from that, they were accomplished. Grace had conquered; and there, where man had manifested his enmity against God, God had manifested His love towards men, and accomplished the work whereby He saves those who believe in Christ. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." God has made use of the wickedness and hatred of

men to accomplish the work of redemption. Man's hatred and God's love met together in the same act on the cross, with the glorious manifestation of the fact that His love *outreaches and superabounds over man's hatred*. Woe be to the man who neglects or rejects this immense grace—this work alone efficacious for salvation !

Finally Peter declares that God has raised Christ from the dead (v. 24), full proof that His righteousness was satisfied; on account of the work the Saviour had accomplished, He had raised Him to His own right hand, glorifying the One who had glorified Him (John xiii. 31, 32 ; xvii. 4, 5) ; a testimony to the value of His work, of what He deserved through it, and of the glory (save His seat at the right hand of the Father, which belongs to Him as the only-begotten Son) which He has acquired for us ; and having received of the Father the promised Spirit He sent Him, the effect of which they saw and heard. And He must sit there in heaven until His enemies are made His footstool.

Remark here, what we have already observed, that Christ exalted as man to the right hand of God, has received the Holy Spirit afresh to give Him to believers (vv. 33, 34). God dwells with men only in consequence of redemption. He did not dwell with Adam innocent, nor with Abraham : but as soon as Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt by means of redemption, though in an external manner, God came to dwell in the cloud in the midst of the people, and His glory filled the tabernacle (Exodus xxix. 46). So in a manner less visible, but much more precious, eternal redemption being accomplished. He now dwells in the person of the Holy Spirit in the midst of His people. And Christ being glorified as a man, testimony of the accomplishment and of the full effect of this glorious redemption, He receives the Spirit promised by the Father, and sheds Him forth upon His own.

The Spirit unites them to Him, each individually, and gives them the consciousness of being sons of the Father ; and He is the Power that works in believers to glorify Christ down here, and to work in the accomplishment of the counsels of God in His assembly, until it will be caught up to be with Jesus, and like Him in the glory. The believer, and the assembly universal (1 Cor. iii. 16, vi. 15 ; Eph. ii. 22), are both a temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. Grace has conquered ; God dwells there where the work and blood of

Christ have made it possible for Him to do so in a world that has rejected Him.

The house of Israel (and later on the world of the Gentiles) must know assuredly by this proof that God had made the man Jesus, whom Israel had rejected, both Lord and Christ. Pricked to the heart, those who heard this, and perceiving their horrible position in having rejected the Christ, asked, "What shall we do?" But as soon as this effect of the operation of the Spirit took place in their hearts, it was easy to give the answer. The work of salvation was accomplished; Christ had been given for their sins; purgation for them was already made; they had only to repent, and to own the Saviour in order to have the remission of their sins; and, baptized in His name (whereby He would be owned in His death) for salvation, they would receive the Holy Spirit. Because the promise was to them and to their children, and to as many as the Lord God would call.

All those, then, who willingly received the word, were baptized, and three thousand persons were added. It is necessary here to distinguish between the *work* of grace and the Holy Spirit in the heart, in order to make Christ be received, and the *gift* of the Spirit when we have received Him as the Saviour, and as the means for the remission of our sins. The Spirit works in us, makes us feel our sins, the need of a Saviour and of the blood of Christ; and after we have believed in His work on the cross, we are sealed by God through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which comes to dwell in us. We have the same thing in the prodigal son in Luke xv. The work of God is wrought in the far country, and he sets out to go to his father uncertain of how he will be received. The work of God was in him; he had repented, confessed his sins, and spoke of being a hired servant in his father's house. He was not yet clothed in the best robe, nor had he the ring on his hand, nor the shoes on his feet. He meets his father in his rags, only he dares not speak of being a hired servant, from the moment that his father had fallen on his neck, kissing him; nor was it any longer opportune to do so, though he might confess his sins. He was not still fit to enter into the house; his rags did not suit the house of God: but he was clad in the best robe, Christ Himself, (a robe which never was part of what his father had given him, which did not belong to Adam in innocence), and he is fit to enter the house with all the honour the father could

put upon him. He has the consciousness of being owned as son, and of having the father's favour.

It is the same thing with the soul. The Holy Spirit works in us, produces wants, we are born of God; and then convinced of sin we find Christ the Saviour, and by Him the remission of our sins for ever; and then we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. "Because ye are sons," says the apostle, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Then is true liberty, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Our bodies have become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. vi. 19).

It is very important then to distinguish between the operation of the Holy Spirit which produces faith, giving power to the word in the heart and conscience, and the dwelling of the Spirit in us, the consequence and seal of the faith which we have. It is one thing to build a house, and another thing to dwell there when it is built. But what sort of people ought we to be in holiness of consecration, seeing that we are born of God, and that the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies as a temple? The fruits of His presence manifest themselves in the most beautiful manner. Here it is not the power that brings the word of God to the consciences of those who are in the world, telling of Christ, of grace, of salvation; it is a power above self, destroying self-love; actual in love, thinking of others, rather than thinking of self.

Most beautiful is the picture that the Spirit gives of the moral effects of this indwelling of the Spirit in the heart. These effects were of two kinds—piety, the religious effect, and then practical love between the disciples. In the first place, *steadfastness in the truth and in the communion of the apostles*—they remained attached to those who were the channels of the testimony of God to their hearts, who were true ambassadors of God; there was true unity wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, of which the apostles were the vessels;—and besides, in the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, in that which was also the expression of a more extended unity, that of the whole body of Christ. They broke bread together, and likewise continued steadfast in prayers. Beautiful realization and expression of the unity of the Spirit; putting an end in this respect to all differences, because, by the power of the Spirit, all hearts were lifted up

above all circumstances, and above the things of this base world. Their hearts were not down here, but with Christ at the right hand of God in heaven.

Those who believed through the word of the apostles were one in the Father and in the Son, according to John xvii. 21. The effect of this power that overruled all human feelings made itself felt in the world around them—a holy fear filled all hearts. The world recognised that there was displayed a power which was not of this world, but which raised hearts above the motives which governed it. The presence of God among the disciples was felt by all; and besides that, miracles and mighty signs wrought by the hands of the apostles were manifested; God was there in the person of the Holy Spirit according to the promise of Jesus.

In the second place, practical love was fully realized. They were all together as brethren, the family of God; all the members of the family participated in the Father's goods, one as well as the other; none said, "This is mine." If one had more than another, he possessed the privilege of love, of giving to him who had need. But this was not forced, it was not the right of the one who was in need, otherwise it would not have been the fruit of love. "While it remained was it not thine own," says Peter, "and after it was sold was it not in thine own power?" No, it was the fulness of love, which perceived the debt according to divine love, of not leaving in want a brother—as himself a child of God. It was the free activity of love produced by the powerful operation of the Spirit of God. As soon as this becomes obligatory it has lost all its virtue, all its nature. To seize from the property of others is not to give. The one is self-love, the other divine love to others. The thought of making it obligatory shews that divine love is not there.

But to return to our subject. What a magnificent picture of the state of the primitive assembly of Christians of the assembly of God, as He founded it at the beginning; to think of others and not of self—divine love filling human hearts. It is quite possible that this cannot be literally realized now; Christians are entirely scattered; there are no apostles at whose feet they can lay down their gifts and possessions; but the true Christian can work perfectly well according to the principles which filled the hearts of these blessed members of Christ. The

Word of God supposes the existence of rich and poor (1 Tim. vi. 17-19). But this does not hinder me from using all I possess, as a steward of God, in love for the good of Christ's members. The responsibility of a man to maintain his family remains always valid; but what can be done in love the faithful Christian is bound to do; and what he possesses of the good things of the earth, as entrusted to him by God, he ought to give for the good of all, and especially for the family of God.

But brotherly love was not all. Hearts were bound together in the worship of God. At this time Gentiles were not yet introduced into the assembly; and the disciples, as Jews, always followed their old customs. The patience of God still maintained the Jewish system, while gathering out from amongst the people those who were to be saved. God was about to remove Judaism from the earth, and to transfer the remnant of the Gentiles, whom grace added to the faith, to the Christian assembly. They united, as yet, Jewish and Christian worship: they went to the temple to worship Jehovah with one consent daily: then they broke bread in their own houses: they took the Supper every day in full confidence of the love of God. They eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, always praising God, and finding favour with all the people.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit, and the manifestation of His power frequently attract the hearts of the people; and then God opens a door for the word, and the hearts of some are truly converted. Still, the acceptance of the testimony is not the same thing as the conversion of the soul. The crowd who followed Jesus afterwards cried, "Crucify him." But this favour generally stops opposition for the moment, and those who have ears to hear increase in the knowledge of the truth. The truth is only truly received through grace; but the fruits of the Spirit work powerfully on the natural heart. Every one can understand love and self-abnegation, and God makes use of them to spread the gospel.

What we are here studying is very beautifully represented in the bells and pomegranates which adorned the garments of Aaron entering into the holy place (Exod. xxviii. 33-35). But he lost this right of entrance in this way, through the sin of his sons. But I refer to what was primarily ordained before they sinned.

## WONDROUS IS THY LOVE LORD JESUS.

Wondrous is Thy love Lord Jesus !  
By Thy Spirit told to me ;  
Love that knows no change, no ending,  
Boundless as eternity !

In the Father's home in glory,  
By the heavenly hosts adored,  
Seraphs in Thy presence crying,  
Holy, holy, holy, Lord !

Thou the Father's only treasure,  
One with Him upon the throne,  
Could'st Thou not enjoy the glory,  
And the Father's love alone ?

No ! for in the far-off country,  
Deeply sunk in guilt and sin,  
Was the bride Thy Father gave Thee :  
Thou didst die that bride to win.

Thou didst change her filthy raiment  
For the " wedding garment " fair ;  
And the riches of Thy glory  
To her wondering heart declare.

Now ascended in the glory,  
Thou dost still in her delight ;  
And Thy work of grace wilt perfect  
When she sees that glory bright.

Yes ! the one Thy love has purchased  
Thou hast said shalt share Thy Throne ;  
When as King in Zion reigning,  
Heaven and earth Thy name shall own.

She for that glad time is waiting,  
Longing now her Lord to see ;  
In His presence to adore Him,  
*Like Him* evermore to be.

Thou art coming soon, Lord Jesus !  
Let this hope our spirits cheer,  
While we follow in Thy footsteps,  
By the world rejected here.

With our eye upon the glory,  
May we here Thy image bear,  
Till with all Thy blood-bought children  
We shall meet Thee in the air.

## JESUS CHRIST AS LORD.

THERE are two senses in which the expression "*last days*" is used in the New Testament. In the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews there is mention of "these last days." *There* it is intended to designate this present dispensation. But the expression is also applied to THE CLOSING DAYS of this present dispensation. In this way it is used in 2 Tim. iii. "In *the last days* perilous times shall come;"—that is, in the closing season of Christendom. To this season Jude also refers, when he speaks of "*the last time*" when there should be mockers (v. 18).

Now it is important, that we should know what are the features which the Spirit of God describes as attaching to these "last days."

In this Epistle we find two distinct marks, by which the Holy Ghost has described the closing hour of this dispensation. 1st—The spirit of intellectual liberty, or of free-thinking, which rejects the mysteries of God. 2nd—The prevalence of moral laxity.

In 2 Peter iii. we are told that "there shall come *in the last days, scoffers*, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" Here, "the last days" are marked by a spirit of scoffing, and the object of it is one of God's precious mysteries—the second advent, or coming of the Lord.

If we turn to the Epistle of John, we find the same thing spoken of as the spirit of Antichrist, which was already working, and which scorns the mysteries of the truth. "Little children," says he, "it is the last time" (1 John ii. 18); and then he describes what characterizes the last time—the denial that Jesus is the Christ—the denial of the Father and the Son.

Now, from these two witnesses (Peter and John), we get one very definite character of the last times. They are to be marked by a scoffing and infidel spirit, which mocks at the coming of the Lord, and which denies the great mystery of the Persons of the Godhead.

If we refer to the Epistle of Jude, we shall find it is not these features which are given as marking "the last days," but a fearful state of moral laxity, such as Paul gives us in 2 Tim. iii. It is moral laxity which is spoken of in both these Epistles. According to the testimony of

Paul, men are "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, . . . unholy, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." This is an awful picture. And remember, it is Christendom that is described. It is not about the heathen world that Paul is speaking. The anticipations of Peter and John and Paul and Jude are about Christendom. They instruct us beforehand, that the last days of Christendom are to be marked by a fearful moral or practical condition, as well as by a free-thinking and scoffing spirit which rejects the mysteries of the truth.

Now you may ask me, what have we to do with these things? Ah! beloved friends, we *have* to do with them. We ought to know the enemies against whom we have to contend—the forms of Satan's power against which we have to watch; and it will not do to escape one of the snares, and fall into the other. It will not do to guard only the mysteries of the truth; we must watch over our whole behaviour, that we do not slip into the general practical condition of the "last days." It is very likely that *both* the features described will not attach to the *same* person. The free-thinking intellectualist may be moral and amiable, whilst the man of ungodly walk may be the professor of an orthodox creed. Jude does not glance at that of which John speaks.

Now I desire to be practical—to direct your attention specially to one point. When the Holy Ghost takes His *rightful* direction, He speaks of Christ—of the common salvation. His office is, to "take the things of Christ, and to shew them unto us." But He is in the place of service in the Church; and therefore, when there is mischief at the doors, He turns aside, and exhorts to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." It is not for the *orthodoxy* saints are *here* exhorted to contend, but for the *holiness of the faith*. We are exhorted "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints," against the "ungodly men," who are described as "*turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*;" the "ungodly men," who deny—not the Father and the Son, but who deny the "LORD" Jesus Christ. Mark!—who deny Jesus Christ not as a Saviour, but Jesus Christ AS A LORD; that is, who *practically* gainsay His authority—who "despise dominion," (κυριότητα)

or Lordship—who reject restraints. Jude is not speaking of Jesus as a Saviour, but of Jesus as a Lord. *His government* is the thought in the mind of the Holy Spirit here. We should welcome this as a sound and salutary word. Is it not evil when a saint does not exercise this continual check on his thoughts—his tongue—his doings? We are not to say our thoughts, or our lips, or our hands, or our feet, are our own. They should be understood to be *under Lordship*. We are *not* to despise dominion. The Epistle of Jude puts every one of us on a *holy* watch-tower, to watch, not against a spirit that would gainsay the precious mysteries of God (Peter and John's word does that) but against the tendencies of the natural heart to gratify itself. The Spirit of God is an active principle—the Spirit is life—the cherubim were all eyes; and the saint should be all living, holy activity. If Peter put you looking in one direction—watching against the forms and actings of the *infidel* mind, Jude erects another watch-tower, from which we are to look out, and guard against the self-indulgent and defiling ways, that would *reduce the whole moral man*—to watch against the spirit that gainsays the Lordship of Jesus over the thoughts, the words, the doings, and the goings of His people.

Then he goes on to say, “Woe unto them! for they have gone into the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” Here you observe how wonderfully fruitful in instruction is the book of God. We get instruction drawn from the history of heaven. The Spirit in Jude gives it to us (*v.* 6). He then descends the stream of divine history from the beginning, and gathers these various examples to press them on ourselves, to warn us against a state of moral laxity. And mark how he describes these ungodly despisers of dominion. “These are spots in your feasts of charity, feeding themselves *without fear*.” The absence of this “fear” indicates this state of moral laxity of which I speak.

O beloved! I would that this word on which we are meditating, might incite us to “gird up the loins of our mind.” Do we imagine that we have a right to take our own way in any thing? We have no such right. As has been said, “The moment you do a thing, because it is *your own* will, you have sinned.” To do our own will, because it is *our own* will, is the very essence of rebellion against God.

Here, beloved, Jude is shewing us the danger of tampering with the girdle that is to be about the loins. May we bear away his word. We shall be much happier—we never can be losers by giving up our own will to the Lord Jesus. As one who is redeemed by Christ, and who belongs to Christ, I should have no will of my own. I have no right to do my own pleasure. I have no right to take a walk just to please myself. The Lord may give me the indulgence of it, and strew the path of my feet with ten thousand mercies; but the moment I erect *my own will as the principle of my actions*, I have “despised dominion”—I have despised the lordship of Jesus. This is the force and bearing of the word of God by Jude.

He then goes back to the prophecy of Enoch. What is it? Is it a prophecy of the Lord coming to visit those who are under the power of the infidel spirit? No; but “to execute judgment upon the *ungodly*, for all the ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed.” It is on *ungodliness* that the judgment is anticipated to fall. And if you and I look around upon Christendom, even now, shall we not see a prevalence of ungodliness enough to provoke the judgment of the Lord?

But let us take this word home to ourselves. May the Spirit apply it to the conscience. *If I take my own will as the rule of my actions, and thus “despise dominion,” I am (in the principle of my mind), on the road to the judgment of which Enoch prophesied.*

O beloved! may we welcome this exhortation. Do you wish the Church of God relaxed in its behaviour and moral ways? Is it not to bow to the cross—to the sceptre of Jesus? If He be a *Saviour*, He is also a *Lord*.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith.”

There, again, is the same subject of warning. The saints are urged to build themselves up “*on their most holy faith.*” “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” And what is “the love of God” of this passage? It is the love of God of the fifteenth of John. “*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.*” It is the *complacential* love of Christ. Does this make the path of a saint legal? No; it only binds the heart to Jesus, with a new cord, as the fresh spring of our affections—the object of all our desire.

Then again, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Does he speak here of the infidel spirit? No; but take care lest the garment spotted *by the flesh* get around you.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling"—*i.e.* not from the truth, but from the *holiness* of the truth; for it is added, "and to present you *faultless* before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

In conclusion, let me repeat it, may we welcome this word of warning. Would that it were sounded in the ears of all the people of God. Let them know that we are living in a day of easiness and self-seeking. Christendom is filling itself with a thousand gratifications. Every hour is multiplying the means and opportunities of indulging nature. "The lusts of the *mind*" (Eph. ii), are greatly nurtured. Skill of all kinds, and labour too, is taxed to contribute to their indulgence. "And the lusts of the flesh" are all akin to this. O may we, in the midst of it all, love the *lordship* of Jesus! Let us bow to His sceptre. Let us kiss it more and more; and instead of saying—"This is my pleasure—that is my will," let us pray that Jesus may reign in our hearts,

"The Lord of every motion there."

But again, let me remind you, it is *Jesus* that is to be our Lord—He who loved us and gave Himself for us—He who *has saved* His people. And He is to be served, not in the spirit of bondage, or the mere observance of religious rites and injunctions, but in the spirit of liberty and love—a spirit that can trust Him at all times, and that can take all conscious short-coming and failure to a throne of grace through Him, with happy boldness. O beloved! it would be but a poor return for His love and salvation, to watch in any wise as *against Him*, and not entirely *for Him*, for He has "not given us the spirit of fear, but of love." May we watch, therefore, that *He* may be glorified *in us* by free and happy service now while He is absent, that *we* may be glorified *in Him*, when He shall appear to take us to Himself (John xiv. 3).

## MEDITATIONS ON ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The apostle has now removed all objections against the perfect justification of the sinner and its practical consequences, and in this chapter he places the condition of the delivered Christian before us, whose deliverance is founded upon the work of Christ only, whose joy is a consequence of partaking of the life of Christ, and whose redemption will be extended to his body also.

This chapter divides itself into three parts: 1., it represents the life in the Spirit and the Spirit considered as life (verses 1 to 14); 2., the personal presence of the Holy Ghost, as *dwelling* in us—and not the *fruit* of His personal presence (verses 15 to 39); and 3., it shows that God is *for us* (verses 28 to 29). First then we have the life in its fullest result, even to the resurrection of the body, then the presence of the Holy Ghost in us, and finally the power which gives full security of what God is for us externally in His counsels, &c.

The first three verses give us in few words the result of the truths unfolded in chapters v., vi., vii. In chapter v. we have “the justification of life,” and the result of it is here in verse 1. In chapter vi. we are “dead to sin” and risen with Christ, and this answers to the second verse, and finally in chapter vii. we are “dead to the law,” which is expressed in verse 3.

“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (verse 1). Christ has submitted Himself to the judgment which was necessary because of sin, and then rose from the dead. He left sin behind Him in laying down the life in which He bore the same, and in which He satisfied the demands and curse of the law, and entered into a new position before God. He was under the judgment of condemnation, because of sin, and in our stead, and there can be, therefore, now no more question of sin, wrath, judgment, and condemnation for us believers, because He is risen from the dead, and has appeared before God. We are united to Christ, and placed in a new position in the resurrection-life of Christ, and therefore delivered from sin and its consequences. Because we have died with Him, and are raised up again with Him, as we have seen already in chapter vi., because we live through the life of Christ, there can

be, therefore, now no more condemnation for us. We are in Him, and as risen in Him we have our position in the presence of God. It is not only that we cannot be condemned any more, but, what is far greater, there is no more condemnation ! There is an end of the whole condition to which it would be applied. Just as surely as there is no condemnation for the risen Christ, even so is there none for all that are in Him. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (verse 2).

The expression, "*law of the Spirit of life*," denotes the lasting eternal principle of life which is in Christ Jesus. In Him we find the living power of the Spirit, which through union with Him transplanted us into a new position, a position in which we find ourselves forever out of the reach of condemnation, as said already—"free from the law of sin and death." Death reigns no longer over Christ, and therefore also no more over us, for we are risen in Him. In that Christ first wrought our reconciliation, we enter with Him into life, freed from sin and death, the wages of sin. We have part in the life of the risen One. We are become of a new creation through the power of God, and this power has been fully proved in the resurrection. It may be well to remark that it is not here a question of experience, but of the fruit of what God has wrought in Christ; and what has been given us in the new life, of which we have been made partakers.

"For what the law would not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (verse 3). It was not the defect of the law that its claims could not be fulfilled by man, but the fault lay solely in the powerlessness of the flesh. Nothing perfect can be made out of a bad material. If the law seeks to work upon the flesh it will annihilate it; the material will break under it; the law never works the gift of righteousness. Well does it promise life to them that keep it, but because there is no one that does keep it, it also does not give life to any; Christ only gives life.

The great point in question in this verse is not the forgiveness of *past sins*, but the deliverance from *sin in the flesh*. It is this that so often disturbs the heart of the believer, if he does not know deliverance in truth, which God has

wrought for him in Christ. Though he is convinced of the blotting out of his sins, yet it will work with power in him as a law in his members, by which he is the servant of sin. But thanks be to God, who has prepared a full redemption for us, in that He sent His only Son. What love! In Him He has fully accomplished the work of deliverance for us, according to His grace and purpose; He has executed His judgment in Christ upon root and branch of sin, so that it has no more right over us; yea, it is no longer present for the *conscience* between God and the soul. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the passions and lusts" (Gal. v. 24).

Sin in the flesh is judged, therefore, for them who are in Christ. Can the presence of sin now disturb us, when it is judged, and we have not to expect any more judgment for it? Certainly not. We judge sin before God, because God has judged it in Christ, and we testify thereby that we are one with Him and no longer with sin; but its presence cannot disturb us, it can neither defile our conscience, nor hinder us from communion with God or from walking in His presence. But when we *walk* after the flesh, or allow the flesh to work, then we are defiled, and practical communion with God is interrupted. This interruption continues until we confess our sins in uprightness of heart, because God then, according to His faithfulness and justice, forgives us and cleanses us (1 John, i. 9). But if we neglect this confession or self-judgment, then we go on with an unclean heart, and have never any real practical fellowship with God. Therefore it is not the presence of the flesh or of sin that defiles us, or hinders our practical communion with God, but our allowing sin to work. But our *position* before God is not touched or changed by this in the least. We are in Christ, the risen One, and therefore no more condemnation can befall us. There is no more judgment for Him, and therefore none for all who are in Him. Though the flesh is in us, yet we are so far separated from it, as Christ Himself, who sitteth at the right hand of God, because we are in Him. Every question, both as regards *sins*, as well as in reference to *sin*, is set aside for us in Christ on the Cross, and now we find ourselves beyond the Cross in the risen One—there, where there is no more judgment and no more condemnation. Christ Himself is now the true expression and character of our position before God.

We see further here that *the Christian life* through grace is inseparably connected with the deliverance from condemnation, and this in virtue of the resurrection of Christ. The law must condemn the sinner; but God, dealing in grace, has condemned sin, and allowed the sinner to pass out free. What now is the result of this act of God? "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (verse 4). This verse forms a passage from the position in which grace has placed us before God, to the practical life, in which this grace introduces and guides the Christian. It is therefore a question of conduct here; the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us. It is not an outward law, which has to operate through the flesh, but a new life in power.

The next following verses (verses 5 to 10) present the full contrast between those, who are in the flesh—in the condition of the flesh—and those who are in the Spirit. "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" (verse 5). The expressions "after the flesh" and "after the Spirit" denote the condition or the whole being of the carnal, i.e., of the natural man, and the spiritual, i.e., the Christian. Every one sets his mind upon things which are according to his own peculiar being, or his nature. The one thinks of that which is of the Spirit, the other of that which is of the flesh. But "to be carnally minded is death" (verse 6). This is to be without any real fear of God, and to lie under the judgment of the old Adam. Death comes in to seal this condition. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (verse 6). This is in perfect harmony with God, and its innermost being therefore is life and peace. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (verse 7). The law of God not only declares that which is *right*, but also the *authority* of the lawgiver. But the flesh has not only desires which are against God, but also a will which is not subject to His law. As soon as the authority of God steps in, the rebellion of the flesh appears; for the flesh says continually, "I will," and "I will not;" and if I now transgress against *one* commandment I am guilty of the whole, because, both in the transgression against one commandment as well as in the transgression against all the commandments, shows the same unwillingness to subjection. Already

the mere *presence* of the will in the flesh manifests its opposition against God. Our duty is to obey God, but to have one's own will means to *disobey* Him. The flesh, therefore, is not only against the will, but also against the authority of God: "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (verse 8).

Our relation to God is now no more characterized by the flesh but by the Spirit: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (verse 9). The Spirit of God dwelling in us is now our power to fulfil the desires and inclinations of the new nature and to keep down those of the flesh. This indwelling of the Spirit is of the greatest importance, for thereby we are assured that God Himself is in us. Yet *He* does not thereby cease to be *God*, nor does *He* cause man to cease to be *man*; but divinely He produces a life in man, a character, a new man, and in this sense a new creature. At the same time it is the Spirit of *Christ*, the Spirit by whose power Christ acted, lived, and offered Himself, and through whom He rose again. The whole life of Christ was the expression of the operation of the Spirit—of the Spirit in man; and this whole power dwells in us. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (verse 9). To belong to Christ, to have His Spirit, is the real and only possession, the eternal reality. And here we find reality. Christianity realizes itself in us, in a nature conformable with God, without which we cannot be in communion with Him; and it is God who has given us this conformity with Himself. We could not be born of God if He did not impart life to us, and the Spirit is the source and power of this life. If any one has not the Spirit of Christ, if the power of this spiritual life is not in him, he does not belong to Christ. But when Christ is in us then do we possess in Him, who is our life, the power of our spiritual life. "The body is dead," because it has a will; it is nothing but sin; "but the Spirit is life" (verse 10), the Spirit by which Christ has lived. Christ, in Spirit in us, is the life, that righteousness may be present, for in the activity of this life lies the only possible, practical righteousness; the flesh can never accomplish it (verse 10). We live through Christ, for righteousness is in the life of Christ; outside it is nothing but sin. He only exists now for us, and He is our life, all else is death.

But the Spirit has yet another character. It is the Spirit

of Him who raised up Jesus out of the dead: "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 because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). The body, therefore, is not forgotten. It will have full part in the resurrection power. We shall have a body, which is in conformity with the life which we possess through the Spirit of Christ—"fashioned like unto his body of glory" (Phil. iii. 21). Therefore it is on account of His Spirit that dwelleth in us that we shall be raised up, but the wicked will not be raised up, for this reason, they have not the Spirit of Christ, but by the mighty word of Christ they shall be called before His judgment seat.

So far we have three characters of the Spirit: He is the Spirit of *God*, in contrast to the flesh, sin, the natural man; He is the Spirit of *Christ*, which characterizes our conduct in this world, and lastly, "the Spirit of *him* who raised up Christ from the dead," the power which shall deliver the body completely and forever from the chains of death.

The apostle then speaks in the two following verses of the result of our deliverance in Christ as regards our relations to the flesh, and our conduct towards it: "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh" (verse 12), and then he puts the two great principles which are followed by death and life, before the conscience of the Christian for solemn consideration, that he may choose his path in practical life accordingly: "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live" (verse 13). The "life after the flesh" here is synonymous with the "walk after the flesh," which is in question in verse 4. The position of the believer before God is not "in the flesh" but "in the Spirit," and the result of this position is, that he walk not "after the flesh." We are, therefore, no debtors to the flesh in this present world, because in Christ Jesus we are delivered from the law of sin and death. If we live after the flesh, then do we walk in the path of death, but when we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, then do we live. Paul here does not say, as in contrast to "debtors to the flesh," ye are "debtors to the Spirit," for thereby he would have brought us unto a far higher law than that of Moses—unto a law the fulfilment of which would have been still more impossible for us. The Spirit of God Himself is the

power by which we mortify the deeds of the body. We are led, not by the principles of the world, but through the divine love and power in Christ Jesus, not by the flesh, but through the Spirit of God. We live before God in the liberty of redemption. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God" (verse 14); they are not *carried away* as prisoners, but *led* as sons.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

### A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION, CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

#### CHAPTER V.

#### *Praise: The Song of Grace and Glory.*

"WHOSO offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith the Lord; God is pleased to receive our praises for what He has done for us, as also for what He is. Who would refuse to sing to His praise! Who would be silent in rendering to Him "the fruit of our lips; giving thanks to his name"? But mark the moment when the note is heard. The enemy was silent, he had "sunk to the bottom as a stone," "like lead in the mighty waters." God had wrought, and Israel was free; *now* He will have His meed of worship. How can He be worshipped when the heart is not free, when the conscience is not at rest? Impossible?

The ordinary thought of worship is the going through of certain religious formularies, and a routine of praying and singing, and perhaps hearing a sermon. All well in their place, but such things will not be in heaven. Worship characterises heaven: "They shall be still praising thee;" "They rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The Father seeketh those that worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John iv). Worship is the expression of our *fulness*, as of His blessedness. Prayer is the expression of our *need* and our dependence on Him.

God first cleanses us from our sins, that we may be happy in His presence. He bestows on us a nature which is capable of enjoying Him in the light of His presence. Then He sets us before Him, "holy and without blame" in Christ, seals us with the Spirit of God; then having redeemed us, Christ takes His place in the midst of His people to lead their praises up to God. He was alone in death, sin-bearing, and judgment; the moment He has

accomplished this and has risen, He says, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee." (Compare Ps. xxii. 22, with John xx. 17, and Heb. ii. 12.)

Now I believe we should sing as Christians—believers, if you please—or not sing at all. The idea of setting sinners, as such, to sing, has no warrant from Scripture. We should sing in the consciousness of our blessing, and to Him, or of Him who has blessed us.

We will examine some features of interest in Moses' song, the chorus of which was taken up by Miriam and her maidens, with timbrels and dances. "Music and dancing" were thus heard outside the house and bore their testimony towards others. Even if it provokes the elder son's enmity, it tells out the father's and the household's joy! (Luke xv.)

There are two distinct parts in this song; that of Moses, and that of Miriam. Moses' song took in both the present *grace* that delivered, and also the future *glory* to which they were called. Miriam only sang of present grace, but did not take in the glory beyond. This is marked and striking, and the more so when we find that she died by the way, in the wilderness, before they entered the land. (Num. xx.) Doubtless Moses too died on Mount Nebo; for the Law, of which he was representative, could never lead into the possession of the land; but that does not affect the lesson which we learn here; besides it must have been so, as he "spake unadvisedly with his lips," and it "went ill with him for their sakes."

His faith saw the delivering grace of the Lord, and so he sung. It also saw the sure glory that would come, and it took in the Jordan (v. 16) and the entrance into the mountain of the inheritance of Jehovah, which He had made to dwell in; the sanctuary which His hands had established.

Miriam only sang of present grace. A lovely note to be sure! But the heart must enter into something more than the look behind into those mighty waters of judgment, out of which Jesus rose, having left our sins, and death, and judgment for ever! Such a joy would never carry us through the desert where faith and patience are tried and tested every day. It needs that the heart be carried into the glory beyond, where He is, and to rejoice in the hope of it in the time to come; in the present sense of peace with God, and the consciousness of standing in the present favour of God—that favour which is better than life. Compare Rom. v., verses 1 and 2.

She pre-figures here the first bright joy, so full and real, which we have perhaps experienced ourselves, or have seen in others. It is bright and blessed, but it is a joy that never lasts very long on the journey. You see it at times in those freshly converted. In such a state the soul frequently becomes occupied with the joy, and this frequently takes it off true dependence on the Lord, and a fall is the result.

There is another kind of joy which is full and deep, and which never dies. It survives all the vicissitudes of the way. No desert sorrows or privations can ever touch its spring. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (Phil. iv. 5). The Lord is the spring of it here, and He never fails. Paul was at the end of the desert journey there, and yet he never was so full of this joy. There was everything to try and wrench his heart. Like the caged eagle, he was pent up in the walls of a prison—shut out from the fellowship of the saints—all they that were in Asia, the scene of his most successful labours, had turned away from him; the saints were going on badly—the Church failing—need had pressed on his soul—and he was cut off too from that service which was his life: yet he finds marrow and fatness filling his heart, and his mouth is praising with joyful lips, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is (Ps. lxiii).

There is, as has been noted, another exceedingly lovely desire which springs up at once, seen in this song. It is to have God dwelling with them; the soul desires to prepare Him an habitation. It is going to dwell, by and by, with God in the land; but meanwhile it would have God dwelling with it in the desert: this is the alternative of John xiv. 2 and 23. Satan is now in the Land; that is the strange anomaly in the present state of things. We are with God in the wilderness, and He with us: but with Satan, or rather against him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

The *holiness* of the Lord too, is now spoken of for the first time. It was hinted at to Moses, in Exod. iii, in the words, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." If God had come down to redeem His people out of bondage and corruption, He must have holiness; and now that they are free, they sing He is "glorious in holiness."

I believe we never understand what holiness is until we know redemption. You will find a sincere soul distressing himself dreadfully because he does not find holiness in his

heart. He thinks rightly, Must I not be holy? You ask, Where do you look for it? And you find he is looking for it in his own heart. The fact is, he is not established in righteousness yet, and he is looking for holiness where "there is no good thing." But when he finds himself with God in righteousness, and redeemed, then it is all right to look for it as becoming the new sphere into which he has been introduced, to be with God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" is all right then.

They are thus saved—but "saved in hope," as Romans viii. 24 says. It never takes you further than the wilderness, with a hope of the land and the glory, and meanwhile the groaning in unison with the Spirit here; but singing the praises and blessings of the Lord.

## PAUL—THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST.

(ACTS XXIII.-XXVIII.)

WELL had the Holy Ghost prophesied (chap. xx. 23), that "bonds and afflictions awaited Paul." Ordained as the apostle of the Gentiles, with the promise of deliverance from them (chap. xxvi. 17), he was now, through his own self-will, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ for them" (Eph. iii. 1). It was the mention of their name (chap. xxii. 21), that brought on him the bonds that now, and henceforward probably until his death, hindered him from *active* service. How blessed to notice, as we shall do, that God did not forsake His faithful servant, but sustained him through his various trials and difficulties, and enabled him at the close of his life to say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day" (2 Timothy iv. 8).

We find in Acts xxiii. his defence before the *Sanhedrim*, or Council of Seventy. We shall, if God permit, presently consider his replies before *Felix*, *Festus*, and *Agrippa*, with his journey to Rome, as the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

A prisoner of the Gentiles (the Roman power) we find him brought by them before the council, that the Roman chief captain might know the cause of their hostility towards him. He takes the ground of a righteous man under law before them, and asserts his innocence. The high priest, without waiting for the decision of the council pre-judges the case, and commands him to be smitten on the mouth, contrary to law (Deut. xxv. 1, 2). Paul was but human, and he

broke down under the provocation. And here we do well to consider *Him*, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter ii. 23; Matt. xxvi. 67; John xviii. 22, 23). When He answered it was in the gentle firm consciousness that neither Satan nor man could bring aught against Him. Paul pronounces judgment from God on the high priest. He did not know him as such, for probably he was not robed; but when rebuked, he instantly reverts to the word of God, to which he desired to be obedient (Exodus xxii. 26).

And here we find a precious principle. Whenever we make a false step let us instantly revert to *the word of God*. It braces up our loins again, and strengthens us for service. And now we find him taking advantage of his position by natural birth, and dividing the council in his favour by this means. It was a clever expedient, but hardly justifiable from one who was confessedly dead as to the flesh. Compare Philippians iii. 3, 7. The Roman captain rescues him from the violence of the people.

And now, in beautiful contrast to the failure of His faithful and beloved servant—faithful though having failed—we see the grace of God shine forth towards him. At the weakest moment perhaps of his whole history God comes in in power with "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." We can well imagine how this must have cheered His aged servant's heart, and we find the effect of it in the faithfulness of his testimony afterwards.

What became of the forty men of whom we now read and their oath Scripture does not record, but it *does* record that God had *His* instrument (of whom we read only here) ready to defeat their ends and protect His servant. Paul's "sister's son" betrays the plot, and Paul is safely carried to Cæsarea, where Felix the governor of the province lived, and there we find him kept in Herod's Judgment Hall.

Truly, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" He was watching over His servant, and though He did not deliver him by means of an angel as He did Peter (chap. xii.) under somewhat similar circumstances, yet the result is attained, and a step towards *Rome* taken (v. 34). Paul had already announced himself as from "Cilicia."

Claudius Lysias had given commandment (v. 30) to his accusers to follow him, and we find them accusing Paul, em-

ploying a counsellor (and throughout this history we cannot but be struck with the graphic way in which the Holy Ghost brings the whole scene before us) against him. His address is a model of flattery as regards the governor, and untruthfulness as regards Paul, for the assertion that he had profaned the temple was utterly unfounded (chap. xxi. 28, 29). The name "Nazarene" is taken from Matt. ii. 23. Paul's defence is manly and upright to a degree, and shews manifestly that God was with him. He is calm and dignified in the presence of the governor, as one who knew that he was in the right. The sixteenth verse is worthy of remark as bearing much upon our walk in this world. Conscience is spoken of in a double way in the Scriptures; first, as 'a *purged* conscience, next as a conscience *void of offence*.

Adam was created without a conscience; when he fell he got one, viz., the knowledge of good and evil. Sin defiles our conscience, and no efforts of ours will avail to cleanse it, but the moment we have faith in the blood of Christ, we have as our present possession a purged conscience, for in Heb. ix. 2 we find that the worshipper once purged should have "*no more conscience of sins.*" What the legal sacrifices failed to give, the blood of Christ *has* given to all believers; for the Holy Ghost witnesses, "their sins and iniquities I will remember no more" (v. 17). This, then, is the Christian's normal position, and nothing can change it; *no fresh recurrence to the blood is necessary.*

But then, in order to *enjoy* it, and walk in communion with God I must "exercise myself to have always a conscience *void of offence* toward God and toward men," and for this the continual practice of *self-judgment* is necessary. Walking in the light, as He is in the light, we detect the faintest approach of Satan, and meet him with the Word. We apply the knife of circumcision to our ways (Col. iii. 5, Joshua v. 2), and abstain from grieving either God or man, and our perfect example for this is the Lord Jesus. This "conscience void of offence" answers to the "breastplate of righteousness" of Eph. vi. 14, which is not a thing that pertains to every believer as does "*the righteousness of God*" (2 Cor. v. 21), but is a thing to be *put on* (v. 11) *by faith*. It is the breastplate of *practical* righteousness, "the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ" (Phil i. 11); and just as a breastplate must be kept free from rust in order to serve its purpose, so must the conscience be kept void of offence if we would serve God acceptably. We find the two

consciences in 1 Tim. i. 5, 19. Hymenæus and Alexander failed to keep a conscience void of offence, and therefore made shipwreck concerning faith.

Paul concludes his defence, having spoken boldly concerning the resurrection from among the dead.

This was no strange news to Felix, who had been "many years a judge unto this nation." He inwardly favours Paul, giving him liberty to receive his friends, and is not without curiosity, his wife probably sharing it with him, concerning the faith of Christ. And such is the power of Paul's testimony by the Holy Ghost (comp. John xvi. 8) that his conscience is aroused, and the haughty governor trembles before the Lord's ambassador. The love of the world, however, and the love of money (for it was no uncommon thing at that time for the highest in office to receive bribes) prevails, and *Paul* remains a prisoner, and *Felix* remains (so far as we know) dead in trespasses and sins.

How solemn to have been in the presence even of God's messenger and not to have received His message! Two years Paul remained a prisoner at Cæsarea, but he cared not, for God was with him.

I think we can readily discern the effect of God's encouragement to His beloved servant in chap. xxiii. 11, in the boldness with which Paul henceforward confronts his adversaries. He was weak before the Jews—taking low ground before the Sanhedrim; but before Felix, as the previous chapter shewed us, he spoke with such power that the conscience of the haughty Roman was awakened. It reminded one of the Lord's words in Luke xxi. 12-16.

*(To be continued.)*

## SCRIPTURE QUERIES.

"J. R."—Will you define to me Matt. xi. 12—"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"?

The expression is found in that chapter in Matthew which specially declares the rejection of the Blessed Lord in His mission to Israel; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The sermon on the mount (Matt. v.-vii) followed the display of the *powers* of the kingdom as seen in Him, and detailed in a few striking verses at the close of chap. iv. verses 23-25. The fame of Jesus had spread throughout all the land. This "sermon," as it has been called, enun-

ciated the *character* of the kingdom, so different from what the carnal multitude expected and sought for; it supposes His rejection, and His followers a spectacle to the world, and governed by heavenly principles, and that they should look for a heavenly reward. Chapter x. then details the mission of the "twelve" to Israel and its rejection: they would go forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Then follows chapter xi. in which is found the passage in question. The kingdom of heaven had "suffered violence" from the days of John Baptist; he had preached it (chap. iii. 2, &c.), and had been cast into prison (chap. iv. 12). *Nationally*, then, from that moment the kingdom had been refused; thenceforth as it was only received *individually*, the individual had to struggle against everything in order to enter it; he thus became in point of fact, "the violent." He had to undergo the disruption of national, religious, and family ties. If he loved father or mother more than Jesus, he was not worthy of Him. Instead, then, of an entry into the kingdom, established under divine auspices, which brought the person blessed into the blessing with gentle steps, and apart from difficulties or hindrances to be overcome, it "suffered violence," to use the Lord's words, and "the violent" (as He terms those who entered it) "take it by force," *i. e.*, they were obliged to force their way through every barrier, and count all things but loss that the goal might thus, at any cost, be won.

"W. L." wishes to know the place that Zaccheus took when he stood and said "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him four-fold" (Luke xix. 8).

He recounted the practice of his life, hitherto in secret it might be, with God. Perhaps the taunts of the multitude as to the Lord's having "gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner" drew forth this half sort of vindication of his master, while it exposed the practices of an earnest heart who, being in a false position, sought to ease a sensitive conscience by doing as he just had said. Of the truth of his statement as to himself there could have been no doubt; nor was it questioned by those who were ready to accuse the Lord and him, and amongst whom his life was spent and known. Peace with God, or salvation, were not known to him: these efforts in secret had not answered the claims of an unpurged conscience with God. "Salvation" only came to his house

that day as Jesus entered it and became known to His host. The Lord, too, took no notice of these works, and expressly said to all there that "This day is salvation come to this house." *It* should be known and possessed first ere such things would be owned as acceptable to God.

"N."—My impression is that these words "wilderness" and "desert," as you notice as being frequently used together in Scripture, have but a shade of difference, and seem to be the variation of thought in the Hebrew language, which gives such strength and force to the poetic strains of the prophets who uttered them. There is no doubt a difference between the words; "wilderness" conveying the thought of untracked solitudes, parched with want of water—"They wandered in a wilderness where there is no way;" "desert" conveying rather barrenness and drought, where the verdure of the earth is unknown—"He will make the desert and the solitary place blossom as the rose," &c. Rivers in the desert would be given, to give drink to His people, His chosen.

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### FRAGMENT.

THE unity of the body is so great a truth, and is connected collaterally with so many other truths of deep and vital moment, that we need not wonder (in a day of so much ignorance of Scripture, and worldliness, as at present) if the enemy should succeed in leading many to deny and pervert it. A holy unity in the Spirit, and such it is, can be denied in more ways than one. Readiness of separation may work in some the self-will of the flesh, which cannot understand either the holiness or the unity *of the Church of God*, or the Spirit's presence with the body. Worldliness in others may appreciate *union*, for according to the world's motto (and motto for the day), "Union is strength," but the eagerness of its tolerance will, before God, amount to unholiness, and the presence of the Spirit it must surely, practically deny, for it sees *Him* not, neither knows *Him*. If Satan be more immediately at work, there will be a holiness according to the letter of Scripture, perhaps, *admitted*; but unity will be so put as to shut out *grace*, or *truth*, or the Holy Ghost.

A basket of good fruit, however precious, is not the emblem by which the Church's unity could be illustrated, but the branch—a *fruit-bearing*—is rather the picture.

In vain will man essay to make *that*; God, and God alone, can do it.

# "WHAT IS MAN, THAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM?"

(HEB. II. 6.)

"WHAT is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?" is an enquiry from Psalm viii, founded upon what man is in himself, looked at as a fallen creature down here; but it brings out, in answer, *what is Christ!* He is the man of the counsels of God—One in whom all the wisdom and power of God are displayed—in whom all those qualities of God in which His nature comes out are made known—the One in whom even angels have to learn what God is. It is the Word of God become a man; and man—that is, the redeemed—share in the blessing, because he becomes associated with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son. It gives man such a wonderful place—not preserved, as the angels were, but taken up by redemption *when a sinner*.

The highest character of God does not come out to angels, such as mercy and redemption. They do not want redemption. Grace, love, and righteousness from God are unfolded, when man's righteousness was called in question; all these things come out in man. Angels desire to look into it. When man is utterly fallen, then grace comes in—a power connecting him with the Creator, so that "He is not ashamed to call them brethren!" Wretched fallen creatures! yet the moment I get the thoughts, counsels, revelation of God, I must look to man!

There never was any being set as a centre of a system, in himself as man was, in the image of God. The first man failed entirely this place, but he will be set up again, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the centre of everything that God has created. "He left nothing that is not put under him"—i.e., Christ as man. "He hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him" (1 Cor. xv. 27). The very exception makes it the more striking. It is the Lord Jesus Christ over *everything*, not only in dominion, but in dominion as *Redeemer*. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Ephesians iv. 10), filling all things in the power of the redemption He has wrought out, "for by him were all things created,

that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. i. 16). But He does not take them till He takes them as man. We come in then; for it is all in grace, "that he might be the first-born among many brethren." "He is not ashamed to call them brethren." He takes us up to be in glory with Himself, "joint-heirs with Christ," and makes His standing ours as sons, so that the redeemed should have the place that He has Himself with God. He says to them, "I ascend to my Father and your Father: and to my God and your God" (John xx. 17). How could He take sinners as such to Himself? He could not. Therefore He comes down where the sinners are, puts Himself in every respect where they are (sinlessly, of course), even unto death. "For if one died for all then were all dead." He was made sin, having first passed through all the toil, difficulties, temptations, trials of His lifetime here—perfect in them. He associates Himself with us down here that He may take up our hearts by the love He brought unto them, and make them know that the Father loved them as He loved Him; and that the world may know it.

It is not only that I have a place in glory, but Christ has come for this purpose, to associate me so completely with Himself; and that I might in heart, spirit, mind enjoy it with Himself, saying, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren!" There is nothing like the Cross, where the work was accomplished for all this. Well could He say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him" (John xiii. 31). *There perfectness was perfectly tested!*

We find the great original truth in Proverbs viii. Christ was the wisdom of God. He was God's delight—the eternal object with the Father, and where did His heart go out—*downwards*, as I might say? "Then I was by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." Then He became a man; took up men, Himself the source and foundation of all because He is the Son (see Proverbs viii., Eph. i., 1 Cor. xv). We see what the purpose and intention of God are, but we see not yet all things put under Him. The first half of Psalm viii. is fulfilled—known now to faith; but He is waiting for the joint-heirs—now gathering by the gospel

His joint-heirs. Paul says, "I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you"—that the time was come. In Psalm ii. He is set as King in Zion; but He is in a higher position—Heir of the world to come, in Psalm viii. He is rejected from it now for a time, passed into the heavens. He takes no place—sits upon the Father's throne—He *will* have His own throne, and "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne" (Rev. iii. 21). But He will not take it until He has got all the joint-heirs ready, that they may reign with Him.

Nathanael says, "Thou art the son of God, thou art the king of Israel:" that was a small thing. Jesus answered, "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John i. 51).

In Psalm cx. He is called to sit at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool. As yet He is expecting His enemies to be made His footstool; but He is gathering out His friends, therefore we must suffer with Him. Satan is not bound yet; everything is spoiled that God set up good, and must be so till He takes His great power and reigns, and then we shall also reign with Him. Christ is sitting on the Father's throne with title over everything, but having taken nothing—His enemies still in power. People are seeking to improve the first Adam; to mend man; to improve the world without Christ. He was here and did not improve it, and will you? Or will you be now Christ's companion in it, associated with Him as one of the brethren of whom He is not ashamed?

The way in which He thus brought others into this full association with himself was this, "By the grace of God, he tasted death for every man." He did not go back and take His place at the right hand of God until He had gone down to the lowest depths that man could go—to the tasting of death—that in which was expressed all the consequences of the ruin of the first man. This was the great and blessed testimony to the *way* in which He took man up to glory. He left the glory and came down, and went back again; not with twelve legions of angels, as He might have done, but by tasting death for every man! We learn two things: the fact of His death, and the fact of a life spent where hatred and death were reigning. He had come to redeem us and bring us to God, come to destroy the power of Satan, come to sympathise with every trial and sorrow in my heart.

This He does as Priest. We read again—"It became him (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." The moment the blessed Lord took up our cause, He must take the full consequences before God. God deals with Him according to the place He took; and this is full of blessing for us. God's righteousness must be maintained. It never could be but by Christ. Perfect now Himself, as He ever was here, in the full results in glory, He must go through these sufferings if He would bring many sons to glory; otherwise we could not go there. But *He was always there*—"the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father"—not who *was*, for He never left it. The Father could not be silent, so to speak. He must express it when He began His service on earth, "And lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What a thought it gives of the place Christ was in—that place of death—made sin, and among sinners, making good the glory of God! (see verses 10-12.) The next thing we find is *association* with Him. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." This was after death and resurrection; it never could have been said of Him in incarnation: a risen Christ, and those who are quickened with Him, are "all of one" (*i.e.*, one truth of humanity) before God; they are the redeemed and He the Redeemer; they the sanctified, He the Sanctifier, are "all of one." The more you look into it the more striking it is. All through the life of Christ He speaks not of "my God," but "my Father," for He was always in the joy of that perfect relationship. On the cross, when He says "my God," this was the expression not of relationship, but of infinite suffering and infinite perfection. Upon these names of God all our blessing depends. I can look to God and say "my God," because I am before Him in righteousness, according to all that Christ is—suited to Him. I get also the blessed relationship of son, so that I can say "Father." Grace has brought us perfectly to God as redeemed ones, and the Spirit of adoption calls Him Father. Now my *place* is settled; it is Christ's place; "My Father and your Father, my God and your God," and the Holy Ghost given to keep us in the sense of constant relationship, and that we are made the righteousness of God in Him.

The Epistle to the Hebrews takes up the question of coming to God, and I can go into the holiest; a place I can go through as a redeemed one, by the same way by which Christ took His place as Priest (how often the Priesthood is used as if it were to bring us there!)

It is a moral mistake to suppose that because I have got a place in heaven in Christ that God is not concerned about the place I am in down here. While present in the body absent from the Lord; and hence all the exercises I get now. He brings practical death on all that is in us; but I get to know the blessed grace of Christ *with my heart* in all I am to pass through; when I need help, and where He obtains help before the throne of grace.

Blessed to know God dealing with me, taking up my heart in connection with all the things down here! I can ask of God in confidence, because I know God is for me. I can come with boldness, because I have got one standing there as High Priest—witness of the righteousness—witness of the propitiation, because He is both. In failure (though I have no right to fail; but if I do—if I sin), I have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation too! If I fail, I know Him as taking up my cause, His grace coming to deal with my heart, to speak of a righteousness that never can be touched; *but it is not my highest place*, my highest place is *in Christ*, but it is the highest character of His grace, it is what makes Him precious when in infirmity and failure. He helps me in the place where He has *learned* to do it—when He showed that He loved me, when there was nothing in me to love! It is the grand testimony to the absolute divine love which took up the sinner—but it is *not my highest place*. It makes *Him* great, this wondrous grace; but my place in Christ makes *me* great.

Another reason that He took up man's condition was "That he might destroy him that had the power of death." Destroy his *power*. What association in those words, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee"! He has so associated us with Himself that He leads our praises up to God! He declares His Father's name unto His brethren, then leads up all our praises, all our thoughts and feelings that we have as men down here, that can go up in praise. He enters into all, and says, "In the midst of the church will I sing

praises unto thee!" He is the person who leads and carries them up, and He can do so because He has gone through it all Himself, entering into every trial and suffering that I am in, carrying up every thought and feeling in the measure in which I am looking to God in it. As I belong to God in it He belonged to God; and according to our association with Him we must pass through it, our weakness and difficulty finding an echo in Christ's heart—a link between our hearts and Him—Christ taking them up for me in the presence of God, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us," the Holy Ghost carrying on the divine work *in* me (Romans viii. 28). He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him. This blessed consciousness is given me in my weakness. I am weak, but I lean on One who can be touched with the feeling of my infirmities. Do you believe in Christ's heart? You do not, until you see that He is your righteousness. You are put into this world to learn all that He is by the way. His grace is begetting confidence in your heart, in the presence of the God whom He came to reveal, and while absent from Him I am learning His love, and the blessed exercise of His heart for me.

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## PAUL—THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST.

(ACTS XXIII.—XXVIII.)

We now come to his fourth arraignment—that before the new governor of the province, Porcius Festus—and it is remarkable to notice the undeviating hatred of the Jews against him. The moment the new governor came up from the seat of government to the capital city of his new province, the high priest and the chief of the Jews instigated him to send for Paul to Jerusalem, in order that they might again attempt to assassinate him. Festus, however, possibly saw through their plans, for he determines that the trial should take place at Cæsarea; and surely we may again own the hand of God in this as in chap. xxiii. 16, in protecting His servant. Angels are God's ministering spirits, in this dispensation doing His bidding even at Gentile courts (Daniel x. 13-20), and doubtless God overruled the arrangement concerning Paul's examination. Paul is now arraigned before Festus, and calmly and with the dignity of one consciously walking with God defies his accusers to bring

ought against him. Festus plainly sees he is innocent, but wishing to become popular amongst the Jews now at the commencement of his rule, asks Paul would he go up to Jerusalem; but Paul knew that the time was *past* for Jerusalem, and that the Lord wished him now to testify at Rome and therefore, availing himself of the last appeal open to every Roman citizen, appeals to Augustus, the then emperor of Rome. Festus but concedes to Paul what was his right. Agrippa, however—a higher dignitary than even Festus, as shewn not only by the title of “king” but also by Festus’ deferential manner towards him—now comes upon the scene on a visit to Festus, and of Paul the latter speaks to Agrippa, referring to Paul’s testimony “of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Agrippa desires to hear him, thus accomplishing the purpose of God announced to Paul in chap. ix. 15—that he should testify before “kings,” &c.; and in all this we may well observe God’s hand. It was His desire that “every creature” should hear the gospel (Mark xvi. 15), and thus even the highest in office are made responsible through the faithful testimony of His beloved servant. As in the time of the Lord, so in the time of His apostle—the spoken word will testify against them at the last day (John xii. 48).

Nothing is more striking in this account of the various examinations of the apostle than his manly bearing in the presence of his judges. We are forcibly reminded of how, when *Jacob* was brought into the presence of Pharaoh (Gen. xlvii. 7) he took the place of superiority, for, “without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better” (Heb. vii. 7), and bestowed his benediction on the haughty monarch of Egypt. Paul was consciously walking with God, and thus was in no way dismayed at his position; with the answer of a good conscience he could confront those who were at this time in the possession of the throne of the world. Paul is not afraid to relate the whole story of his life. He had done it once before to the Jewish mob, he does it now before King Agrippa, and thus we have three succinct accounts of his conversion, chap. ix., xxii., and the one before us, each supplying some additional particulars to the one that had preceded it. Paul had always had the desire to serve *God*. The Pharisees were, in his day, those who most zealously observed the law. He had been the strictest of Pharisees, *but* there had been a promise of a Messiah to come, made

unto the fathers. Abraham had heard of Him (Gen. xxii. 18, Gal. iii. 16). The promise had been confirmed to Isaac (chap. xxvi. 4), and to Jacob (chap. xxviii. 14), and in the hope of the fulfilment of this promise the twelve tribes were even then serving God night and day. And here we may well pause to meditate for a little upon this verse, for it is a very remarkable one. Why did the apostle speak of "*twelve tribes*," seeing that *ten* had been carried captive by the King of *Assyria* (2 Kings xvii), and had never returned, and those who were then in the land were but *a remnant* of the other two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) that had been carried captive by the King of *Babylon*, and out of whom but a small remnant had returned, as recorded by Ezra and Nehemiah, in the days of the Kings of Persia? The reason is simple. Unlike Elijah, who believed that he only was left (1 Kings xix. 14), while all the time God had 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal, Paul entered into *God's mind* concerning Israel, and saw by faith the nation in all its perfection as awaiting the fulfilment of the promise made unto the fathers. He knew that amidst the ruin consequent upon their rejection of God, God had still a remnant according to the election of grace, that this remnant were maintained by God during the long "*night*" season of darkness that had come upon them for their sins, and that presently, in the "*day*" time of blessing that was to come, they would again take their place of allegiance to God, and realize the fulfilment of the promises made unto their fathers. Observe here a Greek version reads "night and day," and not "day and night," as in our version.

The faith of Paul is well worthy of imitation by us who, although we see around us the ruin of that Church which once appeared so fair when formed by the hand of God at Pentecost (Acts ii. 41-47), must remember that the body of Christ is just as perfect as it was in the apostles' day, and will be till the Lord returns. The "*twelve loaves*" (Lev. xxiv. 5-9) represented the twelve tribes of Israel; every Sabbath were they to be renewed; purity was to characterize them, and they were the portion of the priests only. So with us, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17 tells us that "*we being many are one loaf*" (Greek). On the first day of the week the loaf with us is renewed, and purity must be our character (1 Cor. iii. 16), who are now "*an holy priesthood*." (1 Peter ii. 5).

In the breaking of bread we express that to which we belong—the body of Christ. And this is as perfect as in Paul's day, having for its nourishment the joints and bands (Col ii. 19), and Christ's gifts, until He comes (Eph. iv. 4-14). Blessed thus to see the body, from God's point of view, perfect as ever. But I resume: Paul shared the hope of the twelve tribes, viz., that the promises would be yet fulfilled, and seeing that Christ, raised from the dead, was "the seed" in whom these promises were to be fulfilled, he had forsaken that in which he was brought up for Him, and this formed the ground of his accusation before the Jews.

In the story of his conversion he keeps back nothing, for the account of his wickedness in his unregenerate state would but magnify the grace of that God who had saved him, and could save, too, those to whom he spake; and in the detail of the Lord's appearing to him, in the 16th and 17th verses, we get two additional particulars which the other accounts leave out, and which are of much interest.

He was to be a minister and a witness, "both of those things which thou *hast* seen, and of the things in which I *will* appear unto thee." At the time of his conversion he became possessor of certain truths, but these were to be increased by further revelations, until the whole canon of Scripture was completed through him; for to him "it was given to fulfil (fill up or complete) the word of God" (Col. i. 25).

At the time of his conversion, he received the truth that Jesus was the Son of God, for he immediately preached it (Acts ix. 20), and thus he was a minister of the gospel—what he calls, in 2 Cor. iv. 4, "the glorious gospel," or, as it should be read, "*the gospel of the glory*." This was his *first* ministry, for he had *two* (see Colossians ii. 23-25, and Ephesians iii. 6-9)—that of the *Gospel* and that of the *Body*, and both these were revealed to him at the time of his conversion, for he not only saw that Christ *in the glory* was the Lamb that was slain, but he also saw that He and the saints on earth were of one body. "I am *Jesus* whom thou persecutest." These then were the things he had seen, but the Lord had yet further revelations to make to him until the Scripture was completed, and as instances of these I would point you to 1 Cor. xi. 23-26, xv. 20-29; 1 Thes. iv 15, v. 11. Of course the apostle was inspired to write all his Epistles, but these were especial

revelations concerning the truth of the Body which had been entrusted to him.

This is the first particular of interest which this account gives us. The second is, *the promise of deliverance* from the people of Israel, and from the Gentiles to whom he was sent. Had God forgotten His promise, seeing that Paul was now a prisoner of the Gentiles, and handed over to them by the Jews? No; but the apostle's self-will (for he was but a man) had prevented its fulfilment. His mission was to the Gentiles, but he would return to Jerusalem, and thus his Lord's care of him was obstructed. How often do the servants of the Lord now by their self-will hinder the loving purposes of God concerning them? Doubtless the Lord raised up other instruments to open the Gentile eyes, to bring them from their natural state of darkness into the light of life, from the power of the god of this world to that of the living God, to receive at His hands the pardon of their sins, and the inheritance for which with other saints in light they had been made meet through faith in Jesus. How beautifully complete is this testimony! (v. 19.) Paul could but obey such a vision, and from that day to the present time had been God's witness of these things, and now was accused of the Jews for showing the fulfilment of the very things that their own Scriptures had foretold should come to pass. Festus, utterly untouched by this testimony, proclaims Paul to be mad, but Agrippa evidently was not unmoved, for before them all he had to confess, "*In a little you will be making a Christian of me.*" Full of faith and the Holy Ghost the apostle replies, "Would to God that *not only* thou, but also *all* that hear me this day, were both almost, and *altogether* such as I am, except these bonds." A noble wish, dictated by a heart filled with the love of God. He could not desire a better thing for them, for how contemptible was all the King's dignity as compared with that of his prisoner, an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ! Of Agrippa we hear no more. In glory it will be known whether he was saved. But his heart was evidently softened towards his prisoner, for had he not appealed to Rome he might have been set at liberty.

It is most blessed to see these two closing chapters of this interesting record of the Acts of the Holy Ghost, the complete way in which this noble servant of Christ lived above the circumstances in which he was placed. He had

doubtless failed (and where shall we find perfection but *in Christ?*) to carry out the purpose of God for which he was set apart, but his failure only the more manifestly sets forth the riches of God's grace, who at the moment of his greatest need exhorted him to "be of good cheer," and so completely strengthened him for the trial he was about to undergo, that in every position in which we henceforth find him whether it be in the midst of the shipwreck scene (comp. 2 Cor. xi. 25) or bound with a chain as prisoner at Rome, or brought before the "lion" Nero, the Roman Emperor (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17), we find him completely master of his position, and standing for God in the world.

On turning to the text, we now find him a prisoner, handed over to a captain of the Emperor's regiment along with other prisoners, and surely we may say it was with a sad heart the apostle turned his back upon those he loved so well, his own nation who had now so fully and decidedly rejected grace. The Lord, however, did not permit him to go without the company of those dear to him in the Lord—Luke (as evidenced by the "we" of v. i. &c.) the Author, was with him, as also Aristarchus of whom we first heard in chap. xx. 4. This was apparently a most devoted man. There is no account of any accusation against him, and yet Paul (Col. iv. 10) speaks of him as his "fellow prisoner," and surely we may argue from this, that he willingly devoted himself, and surely it was a high honour to devote himself thus (1 John iii. 16), to accompany the apostle to prison, and share his chain with him, and it would seem that he was not alone in this act of devotedness, for in Philemon 23, the same honourable mention is made of Epaphras, and inasmuch as both are spoken of by the apostle as his fellow-labourers (Philemon 24, Col. iv. 12), it has been thought by some that these two devoted ones took it in turns to share the apostle's confinement with him.

It is further worthy of remark how God inclined the hearts of those in whose charge he was to entreat the apostle "courteously" (v. 3., chap. xxviii 7, 16), doubtless they saw he was unjustly accused, and did their best to alleviate his sufferings.

In the 10th verse, the man who was acting for God, and, therefore, able to enter into God's mind, prophesies of the loss that should come on the ship. Unheeded, however, he was; for the *natural* man could not but think that those

educated to the sea must know more about these things than one who was not. Even so in the present day. "Unlearned and ignorant men" may prophesy of the coming judgment, but they are not believed, while those trained up in the schools of theology will be eagerly listened to. How important for us to confer not with flesh and blood, but to be led of the Spirit only.

Again, in the 21st verse, we find God acting in His faithful servant. In order to arrive at the mind of God, he had for the time abstained from those things that might excite the flesh, and now he becomes God's mouthpiece. And here, digressing for a moment, I would ask you to observe how in Daniel i. we find the prophet in like manner keeping himself from those things that might excite the flesh, and in chap. ii. we find him used by the Lord to unfold His counsels. He is *for God* in the first chapter, God is *for him* in the second. Paul, then, now becomes God's mouthpiece, because God had given him the lives of those who were with him, though the ship itself would be lost. We have read of how Noah's family was saved through his uprightness; and how Lot's daughters, wicked in themselves, escaped through their father's righteousness. But here we have God interfering in a new way, and preserving the lives of the 276 persons who were with Paul in the ship. Paul believed God that it should be even as He had told him. And so we find in the last verse that they *all* came safe to land.

The Island of Malta, in the Mediterranean, was the place on which their lot was cast, and here God vouchsafes signs and wonders at the hands of His servant. Not unmindful of the necessities of the body, as we find also from 2 Tim. iv. 13-21 (the winter rendering his cloak necessary), he sets an example by gathering sticks, and a viper fastens on his hand; but the suspicions of the poor countrymen are changed to awe when the beast is shaken off without injury. In this, and in the miracle on Publius' father, Mark xvi. 18 is brought to our minds. And now the hospitable shores of Malta are left, and Italy is in due time reached. And here the apostle's heart, somewhat downcast, naturally, on account of the ordeal he was about to pass through, was cheered by meeting brethren in the Lord, and he thanked God and took courage, and here his prayer, as recorded in Romans i. 10-12, is granted, and he at last finds himself in the great capital of

the Gentile empire. His rejection, and in rejecting him they rejected his Master and his doctrine, had been complete and final at the great city of the religious world, Jerusalem. A further test was now about to be applied to the inhabitants of the great city of the civil power.

*Verse 17.*—Paul is not long idle; and, true to his own principles of making the Jew the *first* offer of grace, he calls their chiefs together, and tells them of “the hope of Israel.” Of Him they had heard nothing, but of the sect they knew this that it was everywhere spoken against. What a testimony to the truths that they taught! That which judges the evil around it could never be popular, and this “sect,” as they were pleased to call it, had already a bad name in the religious world. Now, as then, we shall find that those who hold the truth and teach it, will be deemed the off-scouring of the earth—but it is blessed to be permitted to share the place the Master took when He was here, and be with Him rejected of that which denies His name.

On the appointed day he put the truth before them, bringing their own law and prophets to bear on their consciences, *but in vain, for though a remnant, as ever, such is the grace of God, was saved, the nation as a nation rejected the truth, and were given up to unbelief.* And the apostle has no resource but to pronounce sentence upon them in the words of the prophet Isaiah (chap. vi.) on His rejection as their earthly Messiah as heir according to the promises to Abraham, and of the throne of David, *the Son* had used the same words, Matt. xiii. 13, and again in John xii. 40, when rejected as the Son of God; and now we find Him finally rejected as the *glorified* Saviour, and therefore His apostle follows in his Master’s footsteps, and Israel’s last chance is gone until the time that the feet of Him whom they pierced stand once more on the favoured Mount of Olives, not now as the lowly Messiah, but as the Son of Man in power and great glory. Then shall they and all the tribes of the earth mourn, while we are in perfect happiness, having taken our place with Him in the glory that He has earned by His work, and possesses in His own right as the Son of God—nay, as God Himself.

The Gentiles now are the vessels of God’s mercy, and to them the salvation of God is now sent and they will hear it. What a wondrous salvation is the salvation *of God!* Not only are we saved from our sins—this is certainly *salvation*

—but we are saved in a style worthy of God, we are saved *unto God*, who is made known *in Christ*.

This was the salvation that old Simeon learned in Luke ii. 25-33. It says, "He blessed *God* and said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He had long waited for the consolation of *Israel*, and it was revealed unto him that he should not taste of death until he had *seen* the Lord's Christ. The moment he had got *Christ* in his arms he had *seen* and more than seen God's salvation. The hope of Israel was precious; but what was that compared with him when he held to his bosom God's salvation? The hope of Israel was earthly: but here was something better—God's salvation, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel; therefore he could ask to depart. He by faith saw the consolation of Israel rejected and given as a light to the Gentiles, and therefore he cared not to stay—he was willing to depart. God's salvation gives you Christ, and Christ in glory.

And now this interesting chronicle of facts closes. The apostle's work was not over. For two years he dwelt in his own hired house a prisoner, but at liberty to preach and to teach all who came; and from the epistles we learn that the Lord used him much (Phil. i. 12, 13, Col. iv. 22). From Rome the most of his epistles were written—Ephesians iii. 1, Philippians, Col. iv. 18, Philemon, Hebrews xiii. 23—and from them though we cannot gather much, yet we learn this of his subsequent history—that at his first examination he, like his Master, was forsaken of all, but the Lord only—and that, in the consciousness of having fought a good fight, and kept the faith, he was ready to be offered, being well aware that his departure drew nigh; but the crown of righteousness was ready for him, and he should have his desire to depart and be with Christ, even though he trod the very pathway that his Master had trodden before him (Phil. iii. 10, 2 Tim. iv. 6-9, 16-18). Truly he could say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." How good of the Lord to leave us such a record of His workings through His servants! May He bless these meditations to you! Amen.

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Romans v. gives what God is for the sinner. viii. What the accepted man is for God.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION,  
CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

## CHAPTER VI.

*"Heavenly Places."*

REDEMPTION is the starting-point of the Christian in his course and his relationships with God. Many and bitter are the experiences which lead the soul up to this; but they do not find the soul consciously on proper Christian ground at all. This redemption is in Christ. We come into all the blessings and benefits of it on believing—but the work was done long before—our sins were borne, and all was finished before we came on the scene. Then came the work in our consciences which made us feel our need of cleansing; then of deliverance; but it only led us into the value of what Christ had already accomplished. This is not learned by experience—though experience may lead up to it—but by simple faith in Christ. Faith is the empty hand which stretches itself forth to be filled from Him; and true faith may always be tested, in that it has Him for its object!

Some are troubled, too, about measures of faith, as to the assured sense of deliverance or otherwise. There are no measures of faith in this respect. Faith is faith; and there is no such thing as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that does not save. You may ask, When? I reply, When you have got it! Just as a drop of water is water as much as is the Atlantic Ocean; so faith is faith—be it great or small. Faith casts the soul wholly upon God and what He has said, apart from feelings or experiences altogether. No doubt when faith is simple right feelings and experiences will follow; but it rests upon the word of God as its true and only basis.

It may now be demanded, why I have brought together the heavenly place of a Christian, immediately following the salvation of God, and complete deliverance of the soul out of all its former relationships and responsibilities. Has not, it may be asked, the great and terrible wilderness to be traversed before we reach that place on high? Did not Israel wander for forty years in the desert before they arrived in Canaan?

This was all true with them. They traversed the one to reach the other. We have, on the contrary, reached our

Canaan already, as being in Christ ; it is then, and only then, that we have found the world a wilderness to us. I do not think we ever really find it so, until we are conscious of our place and possessions on high "in Christ"—united to Him by the Spirit of God. I do not say that with all it is so known ; many think the wilderness of life has to be traversed before the soul is conscious of its place on high—but this is not God's way. "Not as the world gives" gives He unto us. He brings us into all that Christ possesses as a Man before Him—and this is a present thing. There is no experience at all in learning this. Much experience had brought the soul to the consciousness of powerless fear, and such exercises of the heart and conscience that it might learn God as a Saviour—delighting to save !

But God has brought a *Man* into glory, and seated Him on the throne of God. Faith tells us that there is a Man in heaven—faith which is based upon the testimony of the Scriptures. *They* tell us that this is the new place for man by redemption. If I look upon Him as the forerunner, He has entered in for me. If I look upon my union with Him in that new place, then I am united to Him who is there. If I was alive in sins, He shed his blood and put them away. If I was dead in sins, He died for my sins. If He was raised, God has raised us together with Him. If He is gone up on high, we are raised up together and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. There never was such a thing as a man being united to Christ in heaven before the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to dwell in our bodies. There never was such a thing as the Holy Ghost dwelling in a man whose conscience was not purged, and this could never have been until after the work which purges the conscience was done. Hence no saint before the cross ever knew all his sins put away, and his conscience purged. He knew of certain sins being forgiven. Nathan is sent to tell David of his horrible sin in the case of Uriah being put away. But no one ever knew God in the light of His presence within a rent vail, and that the very blow which rent the vail had put him in God's presence without one single sin ! As a consequence, the Holy Ghost never was given till Jesus was glorified. (See John vii. 36-39).

The Holy Ghost inspired the prophets ; came on them for a time, and then left them. He did this even on men who were not converted to God at all, as Saul and Balaam. He guided

and taught the saints, and quickened the souls of sinners ; but He must have the conscience purged of every sin before He could dwell in our bodies.

The Spirit of God wrought in souls, and they were born again of the Word and Spirit of God. They had a new nature, which longed for complete deliverance before the cross made it possible that God could make known to any that all their sins were there put away. The children of God were then in bondage, hoping for a Saviour, and a salvation which they needed. Still none of them had the Spirit of adoption—the Spirit of His Son, whereby they could cry “Abba, Father,” given them. Now, it is true (since the cross) that “Because ye are sons (already, by faith in Jesus Christ ; Gal. iii. 26), God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. iv. 6). We stand thus consciously in relationship to God as our Father, which no saint of God ever did ; although they were born of God, this relationship as sons never was known. *Confidence* in God characterizes the Old Testament and before the cross ; *relationship* characterizes the New.

The people of God before the cross were under the “*forbearance*” of God. When the cross came and discharged all God’s claims, and purged their sins, they are on another footing altogether. They now stand as those who have been righteously forgiven and justified. Romans iii. 25, 26, brings this truth out very plainly ; “Whom God hath set forth a propitiation (or mercy seat) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the *passing over* (*marg.*), of sins that are *past*, through the *forbearance* of God ; to declare *at this time*, his righteousness ; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Suppose a man owed a debt which he could not discharge. Well, some kind person says he will be security for that debt. Then his creditor *forbears* with him ; he does not press his claim. Still the creditor’s claim has not been settled, nor is the debtor relieved, the debt hangs over him still.

But suppose the rich man has kindly discharged the debt himself, unknown to the other. How very kind ! you exclaim. But still the debtor’s mind is not relieved ; he thinks he is still under the forbearance of his creditor. Then some one comes with the news that all has been discharged, and that the creditor wishes to assure the person

that he wishes him to know it, and not be afraid to meet him any more.

Now this forbearance was the state of the saints before the cross—they confided in God—trusted His promises. They knew that some day or other these promises would be fulfilled. They thus lived and died in confidence in God. God was looking on towards the cross, and the Son was in the heavens; the One who had presented Himself to come some day and do all God's will (Ps. xl. 6—8). Thus God *waited*, and His people were under “the *forbearance* of God;” and the Son was security, so to speak, for their sins; one day or other He would take up the claim and discharge it. At last came the Son of God; in holy love He took up the work—“bore our sins” on the tree, discharging every claim. He died and rose, and went on high. From the heavens which He entered by His own blood (Heb. ix. 12), He sent down the Holy Ghost with the message that the sins were borne and put away, and thus our consciences are purged in receiving His testimony to us (Heb. x. 15—17); then having believed this testimony to us, He then comes to dwell in us, uniting us to Him who has purged our sins, and then making us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones!

*(To be continued.)*

## THE CHURCH.

PEOPLE say (and that there is moral ground for such a word, and reasonableness in it to all our first impressions I deny not), that others have been more devoted to Christ, and suffered more for him, than many whom we put specially into the Church or Body of Christ; and that therefore we ought not to speak of a special place being reserved for the Church, or for the saints gathering in this age.

But, though reasonable, there is a mistake in this. If we ourselves were connected with two persons, one of whom had greatly served our interests in life—even at his own loss; and the other never had had an opportunity or power to do so, but was more the companion of our thoughts and tastes and pursuits, more kindred in mind and character with us, I ask, which will lie the nearer to us? The services of the other could not be forgotten, but had in constant thankful remembrance; but it is not true that this latter would

be nearer to us. And so it is with Christ and the Church. It is her *endowment by His Spirit* that makes her the special thing she is. She knows *His* rejection in the world, taking part with it, having His Spirit in her, and is not merely like Abraham or David, faithful and true to Him.

This is illustrated, and that, too, very strikingly and convincingly, in Martha and Mary in Luke x. Martha was *serving* the Lord, carefully, diligently serving Him with her best, laying out her care and provisions upon Him. He valued this, as He still does, though she did not fully know this. But Mary was nearer to His mind, Mary was nearer to Him, as when the due occasion came, He lets us know. But Mary was not serving Him, as Martha was doing. Mary was listening to Him. Mary was in company with His mind—she was the rather kindred in spirit, in taste and pursuits with Him. She had an opened ear and an instructed mind and an heart in unison. And this was more important to Him than all the services of the diligent and careful Martha.

What a moment this was ! What an occasion for hearing the mind of Christ ! To think that Jesus has to set aside the one that was *serving* Him ! He would not have done so, had not she led Him to it. He cannot but let us know, that this devotedness of soul, sympathy, and the fellowship of mind and spirit, is more to Him, as to us, than all mere services.

And the peculiar exaltation of the Church is fully implied in Eph. i. 21—her exaltation *above other heavenly powers and dignities* in the age of the millennial glory.

For angels will not have “a name” there. That world is not put in subjection to them. The principalities and powers of “the world to come” will be human, not angelic ; and yet there are principalities there that will be left below the place and dignity of the Body of Christ. And what can these be, but those elect ones in other ages who have been gathering for the heavenly places ? Such will be the principalities there and have the heavenly inheritance, heavenly dignity of some sort, in the world to come, and yet will not be of the Church, not so high, so near, so intimate as that election which is destined to be “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”

We read of “heavenly places,” but we read also of “the right hand” in these “heavenly places.”

## "BE PATIENT, FOR HIS COMING DRAWETH NIGH."

(JAMES V. 7.)

Oh ! let those words be graven in our heart,  
 Re-echo in our ear, and fill our eye,  
 Teaching that in this world we have no part,  
 "Be patient, for His coming drawing nigh."

The husbandman long waiteth for the rain,  
 Early and late he watcheth patiently,  
 Knowing he'll reap at last the precious grain ;  
 "Be patient, for His coming draweth nigh."

"Behold, we count them happy which endure,"  
 Endure "as seeing Him" no mortal eye  
 Can see ; and knowing that His end is sure,  
 "Be patient, for His coming draweth nigh."

The heavens have received Him from our sight,  
 Refused on earth, He's hidden in the sky,  
 Until that day of glory, life, and light ;  
 "Be patient, for His coming draweth nigh."

"Be patient"—He is patient also—still  
 With that great love nought else can satisfy  
 He waiteth, subject to the Father's will,  
 Until that hour, and lo ! it draweth nigh.

"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ! go ye out  
 To meet Him." Harken to that midnight cry !  
 Arouse ye ! trim your dying lamps, and shout,  
 Rejoicing, "for His coming draweth nigh."

O Bright and Morning Star ! Thou dost arise  
 Upon the darkness of this earthly sky ;  
 To Thee we turn with longing, loving eyes  
 Rejoicing, "for Thy coming draweth nigh."

Oh ! when that dawn appears, when Thou *shalt* come,  
 "Glory and praise to Thee !" will be our cry ;  
 For ever with Thee in our Father's home  
 We will rejoice—Thy coming draweth nigh.

"Surely, I will come quickly"—ay, Amen,  
 Come quickly, Lord ; Thy people wait to see  
 Thy glory and Thy beauty—only then  
 Shall they be blest ; for evermore with Thee !

## THE REMNANT OF THE LAST DAYS.

A Remnant, which answers to the mind of God at any moment, is always the living link between that which has failed, and of which it is a Remnant, and with what that which it represents will be in glory.

I DESIRE to speak a little to you, beloved in the Lord, of the history of the return of the Remnant of Judah and Benjamin from Babylon, after the captivity of the seventy years, in its analogy with the present gathering of the children of God in the unity of the body of Christ.

It is a great favour from the Lord to be taught of Him what the Church of God really is ; and to have grace given to walk in the truth of it. I do not mean the *saints* of God, of whom there were many indeed, ere the *Church* or Assembly of God was formed, when the Lord had completed the work of redemption, and Himself as man was set down in glory, and had sent down the Holy Ghost from Heaven and from the Father at Pentecost, to form believers into "One Body" on earth, in union with Christ in Heaven.

I will look for a moment at the larger movements, or those which have been most striking in their character, since that time. One of the most remarkable that ever has been, characterizes the present period, which lies within the last fifty years.

The opening of the history in the Acts of the Apostles gives a blessed picture of what the Church of God was. You do not find a vestige of such a character of things now. Man has substituted what we see around us for what was God's divine and blessed work. One great fact, however, is clear, that if the great truth of the Church of God in its unity as one body, by the Holy Ghost's presence on earth, was lost, it began to be lost in the days of the apostles. God was graciously pleased to permit the roots of all the evils of professing Christendom at the present day, to manifest themselves then, that He might write, and that the faithful might find, in Scripture, a divine pathway and a divine warrant for such pathway in the days that ensued. Not one single exigence but was foreseen and provided for.

As soon as the unity of the Church of God was lost, the effort was always to maintain a unity, for which those who loved the Lord sighed ; but never was it the endeavour until the present period, to preserve such a unity by the Truth ! You do not find, in the early ages after the unity of the Church was gone outwardly ; nor in the middle ages of

darkness and superstition ; nor in later times, that *truth* founded on the Word was proposed as the test of unity.

Soon, then, the whole Church failed ; she drifted into the world, and became of the world ; yea, even the world itself in its grossest form.

The days of the Reformation came. God did a great work then. The doctrine of Justification by faith came to light again. Scripture was appealed to, to prove it too ; but there was no appeal to Scripture for a ground upon which to gather together the children of God which were scattered abroad, by the truth.

Efforts to reform and reconstruct what was supposed to be the Church were made by earnest men, and successfully too. But there was no return to divine unity of those who were Christ's, by the truth. Of course there is no thoughtful Christian who must not rejoice in what was done ; nor can we blame those earnest men who were instrumental in doing it, for not having done more. They wrought with a zeal and courage and faith that puts the heart to shame. But the truth is, God did not at that time bring forth again the truth of the unity of the body of Christ. Christ was seen by faith upon the Cross working out redemption, and faith laid hold upon His work and rejoiced therein. But the results of Christ being a Man upon God's throne ; the Head of His Assembly—His body on earth, with the great fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the Assembly, and by His presence and baptism constituting all believers one body on earth, were not seen. The hope, too, of His coming again to receive unto Himself that which the Holy Ghost gathered out of the world was unknown.

At the present time, then, instead of His people (as at the Reformation) looking *back*, and seeking to set things to rights, they have been taught of God, within the last half-century, to look *forward* and judge all things by the fact that Christ is coming again. The truths of the Second Coming of Christ for His own, and the Holy Ghost's presence with and in His people until that day, have been restored. The parable of the Virgins (Matt. xxv.) tells us how the hope of His coming back again would be given up—first having been denied. Within fifty years the cry—"Behold the Bridegroom"—has been given, and we now occupy that solemn and wonderful moment—*after* the cry has gone forth, and *before* the shutting to of the door takes place.

All the confusion that happened, as in the Lord's parable, between those two events, is but too plainly fulfilled and fulfilling around us. We stand, therefore, in that little interval of solemn import to all.

When the true Christian man, therefore, looks forward in this hope, he feels that it will not do to be found identified with the corruption and confusion around him, by his Lord. He cannot make Christ and falsehood agree. Hence souls have been and are being forced out of all that man has constructed, and have naturally been drawn together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the power and presence of the Holy Ghost. They find that the Church of God remains, because the Holy Ghost remains; and that although they cannot restore it as it was at the first, nor gather all the children of God to such a divine position, still as a Remnant they can act on its truth, and, in the unity of the Spirit, be found in a divine position, in the midst of the ruins of Christendom, a position wide enough to embrace all those who are Christ's, and only exclusive to that which is untrue to His name.

Now the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, with those of Haggai and Malachi, relate for us the history of the remnant of Jews which returned to a divine position before God, as well as the words of encouragement and warning addressed to such; and to this I would refer a little, looking upon its analogy with the movement of which I have just spoken.

Ezra contains the history of the return of the first and second Remnants to Jerusalem—in fact, a gathering, or *concentrative* action. Nehemiah gives not only the work within, but an *aggressive* action from within to seek for more of those who were Israel to come to be with the Lord. And have we not seen or heard of such double action in these our days—the gathering or concentration of the children of God; as well as the aggressive action of God's Spirit in the going forth to seek for others, that they too may be found acting on the divine truth, as members of the Church of God, as far as obedience to the Word, without the assumption of power, will allow?

For what, I may ask, is it which always characterizes a divine action amongst the children of God at any time? It is this: That the Word of God *alone* is accepted and acted upon as the sole standard for all that is done. Of late, as

of old, "Fathers" have been appealed to; usages and customs and the like; but it marks a divine action of God's Spirit when all that will not stand its supreme authority must go; and nought be allowed but where this divine warrant is its authority.

It has been the endeavour to liken the convulsive and great work of the Reformation, by analogy, to what is found in these Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, &c. But it must be remembered that while great things were accomplished, there was no recovery of a position which could be stamped as divine. It was a great work, but it was only a partial one, and more negative than positive in its results, as far as Church position, according to the Scripture, really is. So that these books do not apply, though they were doubtless a comfort to the godly in those days. The Remnant in them *did* recover a divine platform; the Reformers never.

It may be said (as it was of them of Israel, in that day) that their feebleness and failure is manifest to all. So it is. But nevertheless the action has touched to the core the conscience of the professing Church around. It has been the subject of ridicule and contempt, of bitterness and attacks innumerable; yet how many there are, let us thank God when we know it, who when they had calmly and dispassionately examined what is so despised, only found their own hearts held fast by the truth they heretofore joined with the enemy in condemning.

But I feel this, that there is one thing needed above all, which must be possessed by those who would learn these truths. It is that which, alas, so few possess—*Peace with God!* It may seem strange to say this; but I for one would and must feel content that the truth be misunderstood, and those who walk with their poor faltering steps in it despised and condemned, when this great desideratum is not the possession of those who come near it. To such it is impossible to explain that it is so needful a possession. But even the great vessel to whom was given the truth of God as to it, could only teach it "privately to them who were of reputation" amongst the mass of believers. At the same time the babe in Christ, who has peace with God and a single eye, can understand it in a moment.

When we open the Book of Ezra, we find that the seventy years of captivity had passed away; those sorrowful days in which Israel had hanged their harps on the willows by the

rivers of Babylon, and their songs were silent—even the songs of Zion: they could not go up to God in the strange land.

God begins by raising up Cyrus, King of Persia, and laying it upon his heart to open the door for the captives' return. Now an "open door" at all times tests the condition of the soul. It does two things: it shows that God is working; and shows whether God's people are satisfied with the anomalous position they occupy.

Have we not seen this? Have we not heard people speak largely, and wish much that there was the truth acting and leading the children of God together around them; and then when God did begin to work, they found difficulties, and preferred their ease. Yes, an "open door" tests God's people, but it shows God's heart has not forgotten His people, His Church.

Cyrus then made a decree (Ezra i. 2, 5), and the action begins; and in the close of the chapter we find the Remnant gathered together in Jerusalem. Then came a scrutiny of those who returned: Could they prove their genealogy; could they satisfy others as to whose and who they were? Now of old, in the same place, there was no proof needed like this. Of old too, at Pentecost, there was no scrutiny as to who were real Christians: all were so. But in the day of a return, how different must be the course. In the midst of a professing Church, we must know now who are really Christians; true children of God; at peace with Him. Yes, and if the children of God cannot make it very clear now that they are so, we must wait and be sure. And so with these Jews: all who could show their genealogy as Priests were admitted to the priestly office; others could not, and must wait until God would make it plain.

See the close of the second chapter of the second Epistle to Timothy, how cautious people are to be; they must find out those now who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. There was no such thing in the days of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles: no scrutiny then, for all were in reality what their outward position showed them to be.

In Ezra iii. the Feast of the Trumpets had come. This signifies the gathering of the people. And it was the seventh month. The Remnant gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. The *first* thing then was to restore the worship of God. They could not worship God in Babylon.

By the rivers of Babylon they sat down and wept: at the temple of Jerusalem they gathered themselves to worship! The captive Jew might open his window, and three times a day pray with his face toward Jerusalem; but praise was silent in the City of Confusion: it burst forth in the City of God! Yes, and more. How beautifully do we learn this! "They worshipped *as it was written*." God has His own way of being approached, for a sinner, and for a saint, and none other will do. There is no choice left for one or the other. As well may a sinner choose the way of coming to God for salvation, as a saint choose his way of coming to God for worship. A Jew in Babylon might say perchance, "I will worship God here," but he could not do so until the divine platform was reached, and all ordered "*as it was written*."

There was but one way in the wilderness whereby the offerer could acceptably worship the Lord: there is but one way now. How blessed to find that even "two or three" can rejoice in Him, and come together in the truth: in the unity of "our body;" and find that through grace they occupy a position which God owns, and as wide as the whole Church of God! They may be charged with being narrow, and sectarian, and exclusive; but they can say, 'Nay, we find that you, who are of the sects and parties in the professing Church, are chargeable with being narrow and sectarian, in such a way too that must exclude every conscientious soul; because were we to come to be with you, you force us to accept what you have in your midst, that is admittedly not the truth of God; yea, that is evil. You are narrow: we are as wide as all God's people—the whole Church on earth, and we dare not bind on any conscience the acceptance of that which is not of Him.'

Now when this Remnant had "set the altar upon his basis," they were prepared to lift up their hearts to praise the Lord. Then in the second part of the chapter, they began to rebuild the House of the Lord. First the altar, to worship Him; next the House, that He might dwell with them. How blessed was the note of praise which ascended to the Lord (v. 11), "Giving thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever"! This was, and is, and ever will be, the key-note of Israel's true and heartfelt praise. The key stone of the arch on which they rested was "His mercy endureth for ever." It

was the note of praise in that bright day of rejoicing, when David brought up the Ark of God amidst the rejoicings of the people (see 1 Chron. xvi. 34, and the whole chapter). In the day, too, of Kingdom glory, when Jehovah entered the House that Solomon built Him, they sang the same wonderful note of praise, "His mercy endureth for ever" (2 Chron. v. 13). And now when they return from the sorrows of captivity to the Lord their God, the same blessed, heartfelt words are uttered by this feeble Remnant in Jerusalem; and when the true day of glory comes in, with Him who alone can and will rightly bear the glory, they will sing again at their restoration that song, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm cxxxvi).

It is sweet to have learned our need of that mercy; sweeter to have learned how He delights in it. "God (*אֱלֹהִים*) being rich in mercy" is a blessed word. It is His character—His nature; and one delights to own it who has known it for himself, however feebly. He can say, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because *he delighteth in mercy.*" Again, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." He can say, "I will have mercy, upon whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion (bowels of mercies) upon whom I will have compassion." It is the blessed cord that stretches across the abyss of sin and departure from Him, from eternity to eternity, and never, never sought nor found in vain! To Him be praise for Himself who delights in it. The man who finds it is blest indeed, and has learned that he had no claim to it at all, and yet when cast upon it, he found himself upon a limitless ocean of the eternal resources of the God whom he had learned in his misery.

If we might characterize the two books of Ezra and Nehemiah, we would give as the motto of the former, "His mercy endureth for ever;" and of the latter, "Patience is a sign of power when the Church is in ruins." God was more, therefore, in the former: man, in whom grace wrought, in the latter.

Now when the Remnant of Jews sang of His mercy, the old men wept and the young men shouted for joy. And

those who could see by faith's eye what the Church was at Pentecost, and who see the ruin she presents now, and the few feeble struggling ones seeking to be where God would have them, must weep indeed; while those who discover this mercy of the Lord, and that He had guided their feet to that spot in which they could with free hearts and ungrieved spirit worship Him, can indeed shout aloud for joy. The weeping was for what the people was now for God—the joy was for what God was to His people! and these two were so mingled (*v.* 13) that they could hardly be discerned, the one from the other.

Now we come (*ch.* iv.) to a very solemn moment. It has been said that it is easier to win a victory than to use one. It is easier to win a divine position than to occupy such with the power of God.

The first difficulty we find here, then, was the effort to ensnare the Remnant by religious alliances. Those who had no part or lot with the Remnant, but who were really the enemies of God and His people, yet professed to worship the same God as they, wanted to join with them, saying, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him." This sounded well, but a true people, whose confidence is in God alone, do not want the alliances of those who would only bring them down to their level. The truest love one child of God can show to another, is to "abide in the light:" thus he loves his brother. We never can make wrong right by coalescing with the wrong, or allowing that which is wrong to join with what is right. It would be but to enfeeble the right. How often are not those who seek to keep a divine position through grace, charged with being narrow, because they cannot join with what is not of God! 'Can you not interchange with us? we will come to you, and do you come to us,' is said, and commended as Christian charity; which really comes to this—Let us be together, without scrutiny, and do not make so much of what you call "principles." But no; such cannot be. And at once this excites the bitterest animosity of the human heart: for what is so bitter as the feelings produced by the refusal of the religious thoughts of others, apart from truth?

They refused this religious impurity, yet "obeyed the powers that be" (*Ezra* iv). They would not have the Samaritan, yet they would bow to those to whom they were

subject, under God. They would render to Cæsar his things : to God—His ! But when Satan cannot be a patron, he will be an enemy. When he cannot succeed as a serpent, he will be a lion : and this had its success—the work was stopped. They sank down to ease when in a divine position, through the fear of the enemy. Yet while they ceased to build the House of God, they commenced to build their own (see Haggai i). And now God's blessed resources are again at work. He sends a prophet (Haggai) to stir them up again. This was sovereign in Him. As one has said—"A prophet is always sovereign grace." He sends a messenger to speak to the conscience of His feeble few. When His temple was empty ; His glory departed ; no cloudy pillar ; no Shekinah ; no Ark ; no Tables of the Law ; no Golden Pot of Manna ; no Rod that budded. When nothing of the ancient tokens of His presence remained, He has His own way, and sends His prophet, and by His Spirit and His word, which abides for ever, He works again.

If we turn to the Prophet Haggai, we find this. And we find, what we so sadly experience in ourselves every day, that it is easy for unbelief to find excuses for not carrying on the work of God. Faith fails, for we are but dust ; and the enemy terrifies us out of the path of service. He can tell us that we are not the right instruments for it ; that we have made such mistakes ; that we have been such poor servants at best ; that our part in the work was not needed, and that instead of labouring like others for our bread, we got out of our place in attending to the work of the Lord. We begin to believe him, and, like Moses, we suppose we have made some grand mistake in the desires of heart to serve the Lord in His people, and flee away. Oh, to know one's path, and what the Lord would have us do, in the tangled web of life ! A beloved servant of God once said to me—"When I began to serve," he said, "my thought was, 'What can I do for the Lord?' Now," (after long years of service, said he), "I say, 'What will the Lord do with me?'" It is a word full of experience and trust in Him most surely. But to know this, we need a more exercised heart than we thought we needed in the day of our desires to do something for Christ. We need the opened ear ; the waiting spirit. We need to be satisfied to sit down and wait, and find that while we wait it is to be our Gilgal. We need, too, to have the "unfeigned faith" in fresh power

in our souls by God's Spirit working in us, supplying us with His thoughts and intentions about His interests, in which He will permit us to join Him, and with energy to be up and doing when He so orders.

There is the danger, too, as it was with Moses, that when He bids us go we are afraid, and we would rather remain away from the warfare and contact with others, and struggle along in quiet with Him in our "Midian." We would say with him of old, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send;" even kindling the Lord's anger, and making Him keep us back from half the honour of the service He required. We turn our Gilgal into a Midian.

Now, mark the way God stirred up the Remnant. Their circumstances were unprosperous; the earth did not yield her increase to them; and the heavens stayed her dew. They looked for much and it came to little; and the earner put his wage into a bag with holes!

What lessons there are in the Word of God! What wisdom needed to apply them personally, in the power of the Spirit of God, as He would apply them!

Now, God would show them that the moment they began to attend to His interests He would take up theirs and bless them fully. Mark, too, the double difficulty that He notices. First, it was want of faith. But when faith was stirred up and they "did the work in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God," and He can say "I am with you." The next difficulty was the insignificance of what was accomplished. Now this is very trying to the flesh. We look around and see that others are taking knowledge of us, and that we have so little to show. Others have much to point at and say, as it were, "Come and see my zeal for the Lord." Now, if we call to mind the Lord's word to Philadelphia (Rev. iii), we see that that is just as it should be. It seems a small thing for Him to say, "Thou hast a little strength, thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." There was nothing outward, but there was that of which He can say, "I know thy works." *He* knew that when all was going wrong, these feeble ones felt it, and did all that they could do, and that was everything in a day of declension—they kept His word. They treasured it up in their hearts, and He valued this more than outward activity in service, as He did in Mary, who chose that good part which should not be taken away.

This led them to see what was due to His name and not deny it. He was the Holy and the True. They saw that His name, and those who were gathered in His name, should recognise what was suited to His name as Holy and True.

But the Lord encouraged what was so insignificant in their eyes, so as to bring its discouragements, and even if the house they were building was in comparison even as nothing, when compared with the House and its first glory, "Yet," says the Prophet, "now be strong . . . saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." Even according to the word, and the way in which He had wrought, and by His presence led them, in the day of Egypt, in their power, so (in like manner) my Spirit remaineth among you : fear ye not. They were (as I may say) the feeblest thing on earth in that day, yet they were there according to the mind and word of God, and they possessed the disposal (as I may again say) of the whole mind and power of God : not power in outward show of wonders and signs, as in the land of Ham, but in moving their hearts to act, in a day of desolation, according to His thoughts, and answerable to His heart !

And now the heart is lifted up, and the hope of the coming of the Lord given to stay them in a day of weakness. It was not now to be the old men weeping when they thought of the *past* ; nor the young men rejoicing when they thought of the *present* ; but God coming in with the blessed hope of the *future* ; for the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. Thus they were the true and living link between the past and the future, and they stood identified with the Lord's mind and testimony at the present time. And so with Philadelphia. She stands there before our eyes the living link (and those who at all times were true to the then present actions of God, and that answered to His mind) between the Church at Pentecost in Acts ii. and the Church of the future, the New Jerusalem of Rev. xxi. 8-xxii. 5, the Church in glory.

And because of this we find the Lord's promise to Philadelphia is that, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go no more out : and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God : and my new name."

Oh, how men can speak of the past and reason about the future, but it takes faith to enter upon God's mind at the present, and to walk therein !

"I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," saith the Lord. He, who is and can alone be this, will come—first for His own, then for judgment of the world. On His return He would fix our hearts. He will bring in the glory. His glory was trampled in the dust when He adorned His church with the gifts of His grace at the first. He does not again fill her with a glory to be seen, but fills the hearts of His people who are before Him according to His mind, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory, and will come to be glorified in His saints . . . at that day.

And so it was with this Remnant. He did not fill the house which they had builded with the glory as in the days of Solomon. Those days were gone for ever ; but as we read, they "kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy ; for the Lord had made them joyful" at that day. They too were thus the link, as Haggai makes us understand, between the "former house"—the glorious temple of Solomon—and that house which will be again, which He will Himself come and fill with glory, because they were before Him according to His mind.

How painful when we turn to Malachi and learn the solemn thoughts of the prophet of God there, as to the state they sunk into after a time again ! and yet there were even then a faithful few of whom it was said "They feared the Lord," and who "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. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my special treasure" (*marg*). How very blessed ! And this Remnant was found, as it were (that is, those whose state answered to it), when the Lord came to His temple. Old Simeon's heart could then depart in peace, and Anna's prayers were answered.

The Lord grant that when He comes we too may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless ! Amen.

## “OTHERS WHICH HAVE NO HOPE.”

“YE sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. iv. 13). These words have struck me this morning forcibly; not so much with regard to those to whom the apostle writes, but to those to whom he refers, in the words, “Others which have no hope.” How well some of us have learned in measure the sweet tempering of the sorrow in parting with a beloved one, whose affections were bound up with our own, when death came and snapped them asunder—those tender ties which God formed in the heart, and which should be broken, as all must be broken here! How the words and scattered portions of the indication of the life of Christ in the loved one are treasured up, and the clear testimony from such of the certainty of their portion with Christ remembered, as that which tempers the sorrow, and makes the heart, when the keenness of the sorrow is past, rejoice in the eternal portion of the beloved one who has gone to be “with Christ,” the “far better” of the aged apostle!

But, is there not a pang that never has any easement in this world, which the heart must feel, and hardly dares to think of but for a moment, which must ever be there while here? It is when one has passed away from the home circle, when the chain of the affections is broken and torn asunder by death's entrance into a house, removing one who had “no hope,” for whom those who stood around could not console their breaking hearts with a tinge of hope, however faint, that such a one had any portion in Him! What must be the sorrow of those who sorrow as having no hope? It leaves behind a dark spot in the heart's history, which time never wears away.

My beloved reader, are you one of those who have “No hope,” and are “without Christ,” “in this world”? Oh, turn to Him who is the God of hope, to “Christ who is our hope,” and rest not until you find that blessed rest in His eternal salvation! Remember, it is your eternal future which is at stake. How small are the sorrows of those whom you might be called upon to leave behind, if you died “without hope,” when compared with that portion which must be yours for ever—“weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,” if you die in your sins, and are consigned to that place where hope is lost for ever!

## "THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST."

"CHRIST, our Passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v). These words link the story of His blessed work of salvation by blood-shedding on His cross, with the shedding of the blood of the Paschal Lamb in Egypt. Let us look for a moment at what this blood-shedding has done for our souls.

When God was about to redeem His people out of their state of captivity in Egypt, and to lay the ground for His bringing them into that good land and large; a land that floweth with milk and honey; He must not only have a people cleansed from their sins, and saved from the judgment which they deserved, but also He must have a righteous to answer the claims of His own nature. This He found for them as for Himself in the blood of the Lamb.

Has my reader believed in the worth of that sacrifice with God; has He rested upon His word which said, "When I see the blood I will pass over you"?

The blood was for His eye alone; in the night of terror and judgment, as at the darkness of the cross, no eye but His beheld it. Israel were shut up in their houses resting on His word: God was shut out, so to speak, when with uplifted hand He was in judgment, and His claims were answered by the blood, and it alone.

And so it is for any sinner now, who will bow to his state, and rest in simple faith upon the word of the living God, and believe what the precious blood of Christ has done for him with God. How complete is the answer in that blood for all his sins! Will any say "It is not enough"? Will any suppose that God has not accepted it? Some may hesitate, and suppose that because *they* do not feel that *they* have accepted it that still their peace is uncertain. They base their thoughts upon their own experiences. Faith bases its thoughts on what God has said about it, and that He who thought of, and planned this way of meeting our sins and His claims, and who has accepted what He had Himself appointed, is satisfied: for ever and eternally satisfied. This leaves no room for a "but" or a doubt. All, all is settled, eternally settled, for all who are satisfied and believe in the satisfaction of God in what His Son has done.

Let us turn to the New Testament and see what this Blood has done for us, and how full is the Word of God of the certain portion of those who thus believe.

I.

*"Brought nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii).*

Here we learn the condition of those who stand in its precious value with God. Their former state is described in the previous verse, "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 covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Such was their description; such may be that of the reader of these words. Nay more, he may be much more sadly described elsewhere in God's word. For he may not be a Gentile, but a professing Christian man. It is a Gentile who is here described. When we turn to 2 Tim. iii., we find what God tells us of ourselves if unbelievers still: "Men (He says) shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*" Such and in such a way does God describe the professing Christian who has not Christ. Solemn words, and well calculated to rouse to terror the heart on which they fall; the calm, quiet, conscience-searching description which He gives. May the Lord open the ear and reach the conscience of such to see his own solemn ruin, and read this description as his own! "Lovers of pleasures (says the Spirit) more than lovers of God." How large a class do not these words embrace; even if they answer not this—"having a form of godliness and denying the power thereof"!

But even so; we read further in Eph. ii., these words: "*But now.*" How blessedly does the word of God testify for such itself! It leaves it not to the poor sinner to say what he thinks that Blood has done for him; the Spirit of God after describing the one side, adds this precious "*But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" Once "*afar off*" "*without God,*" "*without Christ,*" "*without hope*"; "*But now,*  
 . . . made nigh by the blood of Christ."

## II.

*Washed from our sins* (Rev. i. 5).

One thus brought nigh needs more than this. His conscience would only dread the presence of God, which only laid bare his uncleanness in His sight; and therefore He puts a word in the heart of such—"To him that loved us, and *washed us from our sins in his own blood.*"

## III.

*"Through his blood (we have) the forgiveness of our sins"*  
(Eph. i. 7).

Here we find the blessed consciousness of what we possess as being forgiven. "Forgiven" by God is a blessed portion, and possessed by all who *believe* in Jesus. Many *trust* in Him who have not this portion. Many who would not give up their trust in Christ for a thousand worlds, yet who are not consciously the possessors of it. God has forgiven them; yet they believe it not. They look into their own poor hearts, and rest on what they think of it, and feel about it. They rest on a sandy foundation, and do not rest upon the living, solid, and imperishable security of the Word of God. Let such lay their finger on this little verse in Ephesians (i. 7), and try if they can take up the words which God has provided for faith, and say, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins." Does their heart hesitate by the look within? Or do they, with bold, God-honouring faith, say Yes: To Him be the praise! I have forgiveness, through the blood of Christ.

## IV.

*"Being justified by his blood"* (Rom. v. 9).

"It is God that justifieth, Who is he that condemneth?" is the challenge of the apostle. The soul possesses and enjoys forgiveness as its portion, and which can only be known by itself. The enemy may accuse, but in the blessed consciousness of forgiveness it heeds him not. But when the apostle turns the soul to *God Himself* as the justifier, not merely that the soul is justified before Him, but that He Himself has justified it, the enemy may accuse in vain. In the verse we have cited above, we find the blessed groundwork before Him of His counting the believer righteous; or, in other words, a justified person. "*Being justified by blood,*" says the apostle. Blood has been presented to God,

and blood has met His claims; answered the righteous nature of Him who cannot look upon iniquity, and through it His set free to act according to His own righteous nature in justifying the ungodly. When *He* justifies, who is it that in condemn? The soul that has been “*brought nigh*” by blood; that can say He “*has washed us . . . in his blood*; who has “*forgiveness . . . through the blood*,” can now rest in His presence, “*being justified by blood*.”

V.

“*Having made peace through the blood of his cross*” (Col. i. 20).

The soul can now not only rest in His presence, being justified, but can look around, and gaze with a worshipping heart by faith upon the fulness of Godhead seen in Jesus, and know that in His day of weakness (as it were), when His blood was shed on His cross, the *peace* of God’s throne was eternally made. I say, “the peace of God’s throne”; because, while many rejoice, through grace, at their own future, and in the peace they possess with God—being justified “by faith,” and “by blood”; yet they do not yet see fully that the bright presence of Godhead’s fulness is filled as it were like the holy place of old, with the clouds of incense which speaks of the peace and satisfaction of the throne of God, in the perfections of the work by which all things in heaven and earth will be reconciled, and by which we have been reconciled to the fulness of Godhead’s glory.

VI.

“*In whom we have redemption through his blood*” (Eph. i. 14).

Full and perfect is the word “*redemption*.” It implies there is no return, no change in what has been done for those who are in Christ. As He is, so are they in this world. As He never can undo (for what He does is for ever) never will undo what He has done; never will leave the blessed place as man, which He now has entered through the work of redemption, so they who possess a portion in Him, find it as unchangeable as Himself; they are redeemed, and have redemption in Him. What rest of soul! To find that no uncertainty characterizes their blessed lot! While all is uncertain here below, all is certain there.

VII.

“*Wherefore Jesus, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate*” (Heb. xiii).

As surely as we possess in Him the glory on high, so

surely does it put us in the place of rejection here. *Sanctified* by blood! Set apart from man, and put into the place which Jesus had below. This is the portion of the redeemed. How many defile themselves and depart from this place, and touch the world again! Yet, so surely as the blood of Christ has given us a place in the brightness of the glory of God's presence, where the brighter the glory the more the perfections and value of the precious blood of Christ appear, as surely must those who answer to that place and portion, in the practical place they are to be found on earth, find themselves "without the gate" with their Master and Lord, where He suffered for their sins and for God. They suffer for Him, "bearing His reproach"; here having no continuing city, but seeking one to come.

May my reader know for his own soul's portion that he, by Blood, has been "*brought nigh*," "*washed*," "*forgiven*," "*justified*"; that the *peace* he possesses is the peace of the throne of God; that he has *redemption* by blood, and has been *sanctified*—separated to his Lord's place here, and by blood, sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. i. 3).

## THE LORD'S HOST.

### A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION, CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

#### CHAPTER VI.

#### "*Heavenly Places.*"

But more. Then comes out all God's delight, and the purposes of His love. He gives us the same place, and joys, and blessings, and inheritance with His own Son! He had become a Man, and as a Man—the firstborn amongst many brethren—He took His place in glory, and God set us in Him there on high. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. i. 3). He has quickened us together with Christ; raised us up together, and seated us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians ii. 6).

Thus His people have, by sovereign grace, this new and wondrous place, and they should be the exponents of a heavenly Christ, on earth, by the Spirit of God. The Church of God, looked upon in the truth of it, is the reflex on earth, produced by the power of the Spirit of God, to the glory of Christ in heaven.

We will now examine this a little more in detail. Forty years' endurance brought Israel up to the plains of Moab, and Jordan lay before them. The wilderness is a subject of deep interest to our hearts. In no place do we so learn the sympathies and tenderness of Christ as there, where faith and patience are tried and tested—where God leads and feeds, and trains His people in obedience and brokenness of will, for the heavenly warfare of the land. This is not properly the subject of these papers, though we may enter a little upon it in the next chapter. They had been safe from judgment forty years before in Egypt, on the night of terror. They had *come out* of it by redemption, never to return by that way again. Still they were not *come in* to the Canaan to which God had purposed to bring them; and there rolled the barrier to the land. The Jordan is commonly taken as a type of death, and very justly. But it is not death physically—or in other words the death of the body. It is the fact of Christ's death and resurrection being counted to us in grace, and so used that it is death and resurrection morally to us, leading us "in Christ," into a new scene altogether; a place where we know no man after the flesh, yea, if we had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him thus no more (2 Cor. v. 16).

We read in Joshua iii., that the Ark of God—borne by the Levites—was first to pass down into the waters of death, the last token of the enemy's power. There was to be a space between it and the Host which followed after. Then as the feet of the priests touched the brim of the waters, they stood upright on an heap, and all the Host of the Lord passed over into the land in which the Lord delighted, at the other side of Jordan. *God* had passed over them when He was judging Egypt. *They* passed over here, when it was a question of sovereign grace bringing them into the land in which He chose to dwell.

None could pass that way till Christ first was there. He must dry up that mighty stream of death in which God's judgment was expressed. He must thus end human life, which the enemy could touch, before He introduced us into the life beyond it all. The waters compassed Him about, and flowed over His head. Deep called to deep as they reached His soul. But all was borne, and the bed of the river of death proved, as His people traversed it with dry-shod feet, that all had borne down upon Him; "All thy waves and billows passed over me."

The priests "stood firm," bearing the Ark; and "the people passed over right against Jericho." There was the organized strength of the Enemy in unbroken power—the seven nations of Canaan were also there. Thus has the Lord died and risen; ascended on high He has entered, as Man, into a new sphere for man, and has introduced us into life on the other side of death, and given us all that He possesses as Man.

In Ephesians i. this new place is unfolded according to the counsels of God. It is remarkable that there you have an allusion, not only to the Passover and Red Sea; that is the judgment of sin, and redemption of the people of God; but we have also in it the Ark in and out of the Jordan, and in our Canaan—the heavenlies. Thus, the whole wilderness is dropped; fulfilling most fully in the antitype the statement of God's purposes to Moses in Exod. iii. 8, and the full result of those counsels in introducing man into His presence on high.

Thus we read (v. 7), "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The blood of Christ, on the ground of which we have this forgiveness and the redemption which is in Christ, is the way into those counsels of His grace, and purposes in Christ before the world began. Then we read (v. 19) of "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 heavenly places." Thus the true Ark of the Covenant has been in the waters, and in the next chapter (ch. ii. 3-6), the people of God have passed through. "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together in Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

We have thus been introduced into this new land. We might say in the language of Psalm cxix. 3, "The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back." As the Psalmist links together the deliverance out of Egypt of the Red Sea, and the entrance into the land through the Jordan; so does the breadth of the purposes of that God, "who is rich in mercy," take in, in Eph. i., ii., our present introduction into "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as the people whom He has cleansed and redeemed!

## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE MISSIONARY TRAVELS OF ST. PAUL.

OF the New Testament there are five books which may be termed historical, viz., the four Gospels and the Acts, and one which is prophetic, the Revelations or Apocalypse. So far the New Testament has features in common with the Old. The remaining twenty-one books, however, are of a character peculiar to themselves, being epistolary communications from apostles to individuals, to assemblies, to a class of believers, or to saints in general. Turning now to the Acts, the only inspired church history that we have, and the earliest account of the spread of Christian truth that we possess, written by Luke, an eye-witness of some of the facts which he has recorded (Acts xvi. 10, 40; xx. 5; xxi. 25; xxvii—xxviii. 31), we find compressed into a very small bulk an outline of the chief features of the work in Palestine and outside of it, during the first twenty-eight years from the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

It is clear that we have not a full account of all that went on. It is a journal or diary giving the events of each day, or each week, as they passed before the writer's eye, or were related to him by those who took part in them. Yet there is a plan, a method in the book, presenting to us a careful selection of facts, by which the character of the work then carried on may be readily understood. Had Luke desired it, he might, we must be well assured, have written a much more detailed account of the rise and spread of that most interesting work by which people of all classes, nationalities, and intellectual powers were turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God. For confining ourselves for the moment to the labours of St. Paul, whose companion for some years he clearly was, how much was there of interest in the active life of the great apostle of the Gentiles which the historian must have known, or could easily have procured from the prisoner at Rome during his enforced cessation from active missionary enterprise, whilst awaiting the issue of his appeal to the Emperor Nero! From the little that we do know, we can surmise that very much has been left unrecorded.

The history, however, bears on its face no mark of having been written in haste, nor do we gather from it that the writer was intruded upon ere he had finished his labours, obliged,

from some interruption, to lay down his pen at the moment, with the intention of taking it up again on the first favourable opportunity. Perusing the book we surely rise up with the belief that we have all that Luke, guided by the Holy Ghost, was intended to give. It is not a mere fragment of a history. It is not a syllabus for an elaborate work on an extended scale. It is complete as it is. It is all that he wrote, and all the history that he was intended, by the Spirit, to add to the pages of Sacred Writ. From Jerusalem to Rome, from the metropolis of Judæa to the metropolis of the Roman earth the historian conducts us, and then leaves us. We learn how the work commenced in Jerusalem. We learn that it had extended to Rome. But how or when it got there we know not. On this point, as on many others in which Luke could have enlightened us, he is carefully reticent. "My Church," as the Lord calls it, did not exist before the day of Pentecost. There was, however, an assembly in Rome before Paul first journeyed thither along the Appian Way : and in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, Christians met for worship ere Paul had reached Jerusalem for the last time previous to his voyage to Rome (Rom. xvi. 3). Much then, of interest, which he has left unsaid, Luke could surely have told us. Yet he has done his work, written his inspired history in the way of all others most calculated to benefit God's saints. For, whilst narrating facts, he recounts them in such a way as to furnish us with the characteristic features of the work to which he calls our attention.

And now, confining ourselves to the narratives of the missionary journeys of the apostle Paul, we must see that, whereas that energetic servant and traveller goes over a great deal of his ground more than once, the historian rarely details to us anything which happened in a place in a subsequent visit, if he has dilated on the work carried on there during a previous one. Twice was Paul in Greece (xvi. xviii. ; xx. 2, 4), twice also was he at Lystra and Derbe (xiv. ; xvi. 1, 4) ; but what took place on the occasion of his second visit to these districts, with the exception of a short account of Timothy's admission to the travelling party of his father in the faith, is buried in forgetfulness, as far as men are concerned, though written, we well know, in the book of God's remembrance for ever. Again, on two separate occasions, the apostles traversed the regions of Phrygia and Galatia (xvi. 6 ; xviii. 23) ; and, although we

know that in the latter province there was an extensive and most interesting work, several assemblies having been formed there (Gal. i. 2 ; iii. 2, 4 ; iv. 13, 15), the historian passes it over in silence, and acquaints us only with this fact, that Paul, when he revisited those provinces, did it in an inverse order. On his first visit he went into Phrygia before Galatia, for he approached them from Lystra in Lycaonia. On the second he traversed Galatia before he entered Phrygia, having journeyed there from Antioch, in Syria. Then of his labours round about to Illyricum we have not a syllable from Luke, though Paul had travelled over these parts before Luke's history was finished, if, indeed, it had been begun, for our only informant of this portion of the apostle's labours is the traveller himself, who just mentions it in his letter to the Romans (xv. 19). Since then it is evident that it was not the historian's intention to give us a full account of the apostle's labours, for of his travels after the termination of his first imprisonment we have not a word from Luke, and only learn of them from notices in the epistles (2 Tim. iv. 20 ; Titus iii. 12), and yet, the evangelist was with him to almost, if not quite, the close of his life. What, it may be asked, was Luke's design in writing, as he has done, his account of Paul's missionary journeys? An answer to this may be found if the characteristics of these journeys are pointed out.

The journeys are three in number, related respectively in xiii.-xiv. ; xv. 36-xviii. 22, and xviii. 23-xxi. 15, having features, some of which are common to all, but some peculiar to each of these missionary tours.

Of features in common the following may be specified :—

On each journey Paul starts from Antioch, in Syria, never from Jerusalem (xiii. 1 ; xv. 36 ; xviii. 33), though Jerusalem was dear to his heart, and, as occasion offered, he visited it. God's work among the Gentiles, however, had for its starting place that city in which the gospel had been first preached to Greeks by Hellenistic Jews (xi. 20). The importance of this was afterwards seen ; since Gentiles, though indebted to those who had been Jews for their first acquaintance with the glad tidings of salvation, were never to be subordinated to Jerusalem. They stood upon equal, common, nay, the same, ground as Christians in Judea, being members with them of the body of Christ. Hence the Spirit of God selected a centre on earth from which that work should spread, and He chose Antioch, on the banks of the Orontes. From

thence the apostles Barnabas and Sauli started at first ; from thence, too, Paul, with his companions, went forth on his subsequent tours. Thus the Gentiles to whom he went had nothing to do directly with Jerusalem, and Jewish customs ; and the habits of Christians in the holy city were never the rule for Gentile converts, nor the model to which they were to be conformed. Peter, the apostle of the circumcision, started forth each time from Jerusalem (viii. 14, 25 ; ix. 32 ; xi. 2). Paul each time began from Antioch, and returned thither twice. What his purpose was in his third journey we cannot state, for that tour was never concluded, his arrest at Jerusalem upset all his plans, and certainly prevented his return to Antioch. But whilst the freedom of Gentile converts from Jewish ways and Judaizing practices was thus provided for, it is instructive to remark that the uniform plan of Paul was to seek out, first of all, those of his own countrymen in the cities whither he went. To the Jew first, and also to the Greek was his invariable rule. If the former rejected the offer of grace, he left them and turned to the Gentiles. God's joy in saving souls was not to be curtailed because the Jews rejected the salvation (xiii. 46 ; xviii. 6, 7 ; xix. 9). Hence he taught in the synagogues, wherever there was one, till the Jews could bear the word no longer. At Salamis there were several synagogues (xiii. 5). Elsewhere very generally there was only one (xiii. 14 ; xiv. 1 ; xvii. 1, 10, 17 ; xviii. 4, 19). At some places, as Philippi, and, perhaps, at Lystra, Derbe, Amphipolis, and Apollonia, there was none. Yet, at Philippi, he sought out the place for prayer, whither the Jews resorted, and spoke unto the women whom he met there (xvi. 13). Thus earnestly and persistently did he seek to win them to Christ, and though they were, for the most part, his bitterest foes, divine love in him was active towards them.

A third feature common to the three journeys is Paul's care for the saints. With a heart that yearned over sinners, as his first Epistle to the Thessalonians discloses (1 Thes. ii. 1, 8), he also thought of the saints, and provided for their welfare (xiv. 21-23 ; xv. 36, 41 ; xviii. 23 ; xx. 2, 7-11, 17-36). His desire for such, that epistle (1 Thes. ii. 9-12), and others fully demonstrate. In each of these features, common to all the journeys, and indicative of the principle on which the work in general was carried on, there are characteristics peculiar to each of Paul's missionary travels.

Very soon after Paul was converted he commenced working

for the Lord, by preaching and teaching. The synagogues at Damascus, for there were several in that city, were visited by the convert, and the truth, that Jesus is God's Son, was preached to the congregations assembled within their walls (ix. 20-22). At Jerusalem, too, he laboured (ix. 29), and probably in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. i. 21 ; Acts xv. 41), before Barnabas brought him to Antioch. Barnabas, too, was no untried servant before he went down to survey the work on the banks of the Orontes. Hence the appointment of these two for the mission work, narrated in Acts xiii, was not their first attempt at labouring in the word. Paul, ere this, had preached the faith which once he destroyed. Yet it was a call of no ordinary kind, and one peculiar to them. The glad tidings of grace had reached Antioch through human channels, whose names are to us unknown, but led surely of the Spirit in what they did, and blessed greatly in their simple, yet earnest work of acquainting the Greeks around them with the grace of which all could be partakers (xi. 21). But a time had come when the gospel was to spread abroad, far and wide, and the instruments chosen for that service were Barnabas and Paul. Accordingly, one marked feature of this, the first of the three missionary journeys, of which Luke gives details, is the action of the Holy Ghost in selecting and sending forth these two workmen, commissioned by Himself, to commence, and to carry out the work to which He had called them. They departed on their travels, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost. A Divine Person was on earth directing the spreading abroad of God's truth. One discerns in the work at Antioch, and in the setting apart of these two men for aggressive missionary enterprise, the care of the Spirit of God. He led, undoubtedly, these Hellenistic Jews to evangelize Greeks at Antioch. A happy service it must have been. Something, too, so new for the believers to embark in, to be allowed to tell to many other nations of the saving grace of God, in which they, too, could share, no longer to be as dogs under the table, but to enjoy equal, common rights with the most favoured of men upon earth, how the heart of those earnest Christians must have swelled within them as they witnessed Greek after Greek bow to God's testimony, and drink for himself of living water, never more to thirst! A great number, we read, believed. The work was extensive, genuine, and abiding. Earnest labourers spoke to hearts made ready to receive the message. The hand of the Lord,

too, was with these men, from whom rivers of living water were flowing out in fertilising streams. Tidings of this reaching Jerusalem, Barnabas himself, an Hellenistic or foreign Jew, a native of Cyprus, was sent by the Church to look into the work. Fresh workmen were now required to carry on what these hearty Christians of Cyprus and Cyrene had commenced. Exhortation was needed. This Barnabas could give and he gave it. But more was wanted. Conversions, in great numbers, had taken place. The believers then required teaching, and such as Barnabas evidently felt he could not supply single-handed, so he went to Tarsus for Saul, and brought him to Antioch, and there, for a whole year, they taught much people. Thus, to the ordinary work of evangelization, there was added exhortation, and there was introduced, in addition, what is called teaching. Conversion, exhortation, teaching, all these are recognized as requisite in such a work. Barnabas was pre-eminently, it would seem, an exhorter, but Paul was a teacher. Whilst the quondam Levite was alone at Antioch, exhortation seems to have been the character of the work; when Saul appeared, teaching was its distinguishing feature. What happy days these must have been—a halcyon time for all concerned! But souls elsewhere had need of salvation, and the Spirit was about to manifest His care for such.

Barnabas, then, and Saul are nominated for this work; called to it by the Holy Ghost. We have seen what simple-hearted men can do in the way of evangelistic service, and how the Lord owned their work, yet for the service now to be undertaken men were chosen who could not only tell of God's saving grace, but could minister to believers as well. Their journey, then, was undertaken by divine authority, and souls were to be evangelized, churches planted, and believers built up by men fitted for such a work, and specially selected by the Spirit of God. How carefully did the Spirit keep the direction of the work in His own hands. The instruments were both chosen and commissioned by Himself. Besides telling us this, that the work was set on foot by divine authority, Luke gives us a sample of the gospel which they proclaimed. Often must Paul have preached the good tidings of grace. It was nothing new to him to set it forth. Yet till he started on this journey we have no opportunity of learning how he presented it. But now, conducting his readers, as it were, to Antioch in Pisidia, after tracing thither the steps of these two apostles (xiv. 4, 14) Luke

admits us to the privilege of becoming acquainted with an evangelistic address given by Saul of Tarsus to the congregation assembled in the synagogue on the Sabbath-day. And this is the only one of its kind delivered by Paul, of which the historian has preserved the account. The company was a mixed one, composed of Jews and proselytes—children of the stock of Abraham, and men who feared God. At Jerusalem Peter had preached, but he had for his audience those who were concerned in the judicial murder of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul's audience at Antioch in Pisidia stood on different ground. Hence to them he could speak of the fullest grace, without having to charge on them the sin of crucifying the Lord, the position of Paul's audience being more like that of souls in general, the position of Peter's being peculiar. Compare Peter's words in ii. 23, iii. 14-17, iv. 10, v. 30, with Paul's in xiii. 27. What, then, was the character of the message delivered by him on that day? The burden of it was this: God was a giver. He had given to Israel rulers; He had given them promises, which He had now fulfilled; and would give to Israel the sure mercies of David, made sure because to be fulfilled to them in the One who was risen from the dead. And so free, so full was God's grace, that forgiveness of sins was now preached through the Lord Jesus, and justification, too, from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. A full, a rich, a precious message indeed, and many felt it to be so, for they asked to have it repeated. For we should read the passage, "And as they went out they besought that these words might be spoken to them on the next Sabbath" (xiii. 42), the general request of the congregation thus witnessing to the character of the message, which suited all classes. We see, then, surely the propriety of the historian introducing into his account of the first journey a sample of the apostle's way of preaching that glad tidings of which he was made a minister (Col. i. 23).

Another feature of this journey should be noticed. At Antioch, addressing those who knew the Scriptures or had access to them, Paul refers to them; but at times he had people to speak to—pure barbarians, ignorant barbarians—who knew nothing of the Old Testament volume. How would he deal with such? On what common ground could he meet such? Of this likewise Luke informs us, as he narrates the brief discourse to the multitude at the gates of the city of Lystra. The God of grace was the God of creation, the living God,

who displayed Himself in creation as a giver to men upon earth of rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. Thus, whether in the synagogue, or surrounded by a crowd of ignorant idolaters who thought to offer sacrifices to him and Barnabas, he proclaimed the living God as One who gave to His creatures—a thought to many surely so new, but so bright—God in the activity of His grace had given His Son to die for sinners, and was now giving everlasting life, and pardon, and peace to all who believed on the Lord. Such was the character of God which they set forth, a message capable of adaptation to every class and condition of men upon earth.

The second journey was undertaken by Paul without Barnabas, for reasons into which we need not here enter. The work, commenced by divine authority, was carried on under divine directions. This was the special characteristic of the second journey, which, commencing from Antioch in Syria, was continued through Asia Minor to Greece, and subsequently to Jerusalem. On this tour Paul was to be brought into contact with educated Greeks, in places which had become famous for mental activity, as Athens and Corinth. The Greeks, he wrote to the Corinthians, seek after wisdom; the activity of man's mind was thought much of by them. On this tour, then, the guidance of the Spirit is specially demonstrated. Human wisdom did not direct the apostle, for he was subject to divine guidance. Traversing Asia Minor, he desired to enter the province of Asia, but the Holy Ghost forbade him; seeking to turn aside to Bithynia, the Spirit of Jesus would not suffer them to go there: neither to the right hand nor to the left could they turn, so they had to journey straight on to Troas. Clearly divine guidance was manifested. Paul's mind would have led him to evangelize still in Asia, the Holy Ghost's purpose, however, was to lead him into Europe. The plan, then, of the work, and the development of it, were both of God. And when they arrived at Troas, Paul understood the reason and the wisdom of his being diverted from his purpose. The time had arrived to carry the gospel into Greece, and a vision appeared to him of a man of Macedonia entreating his assistance. Thus were they directed. Reaching Philippi, there was work to be done in the prison; but to evangelize the gaoler, one of those whom the Father had given to His Son, Paul and Silas must be imprisoned. In a way surely never expected, the Lord worked in that chief town of

the province of Macedonia Prima. To Thessalonica, the capital of the second division of Macedonia, to Berea, and to Athens the apostle travelled, and finally reached Corinth. Labouring for a time with apparently little success, the Lord Jesus by night in a vision comforted him, and acquainted him with His purpose of grace towards souls in that licentious city; and thus again divinely directed, the apostle remains and meets with great success. How plain was it that in this work human wisdom had no place! Had Paul acted in accordance with his own thoughts, he would not then have crossed the straits which separates Asia from Europe, and the work at Thessalonica, Philippi, and Corinth would have been postponed. What he was not then allowed to do, he accomplished on his third circuit. Where he had not thought of going he was guided by the Holy Ghost, who always in the Acts directs the work, whilst the Lord cheers His servant in the midst of discouragements. How needful is divine direction and superintendence, when even an apostle could be wholly at fault!

Another feature in connection with this journey is the character of the only address of which Luke has preserved any account. For a purely evangelistic discourse by the great apostle of the Gentiles we should turn to Acts xiii.; for his manner of reasoning with ignorant heathen we should read his few words at Lystra. At Athens, on the Areopagus, how different is the tenor of his discourse from either of the two just mentioned! On this occasion he is more on his defence; but seizing an opportunity from the inscription on an altar he had met with, he announced to them The Unknown God, and demonstrated the insensate folly of even the most intellectual of mankind. The Greeks called themselves "Offspring of God." This, in a way, was true, for Adam was the son of God. But how then could they worship stocks and stones as their gods? The boast of their poets, Aratus and Cleanthes, demonstrated the folly of their practice. If human wisdom could be at fault as to the work of the Lord, it was indeed a blind guide to lead its possessor into the knowledge of God. The tenor, then, of this discourse, is in perfect harmony with the special characteristic of St. Paul's second journey.

From Antioch he started a third time to visit the churches and evangelize souls. Re-visiting scenes of former labour in Asia and in Europe, the historian directs our attention chiefly to the work at Ephesus. A special feature of this circuit is

the divine witness borne to the work. Paul worked miracles through divine power. Ephesus was a chief centre of idolatries. The inhabitants prided themselves on their city being the temple keeper (*νεωκόρος*) of the goddess Diana, or Artemis. On this journey then, the apostle was brought in a very marked way face to face with idolatry, and God bore witness to His servant, accrediting his teaching and apostolic commission by the works which Paul was permitted to do. He ministered the Holy Ghost to believers at Ephesus, and God wrought special miracles by him. Virtue could flow to others through handkerchiefs and aprons carried to the sick from his person, and the name of Jesus, when used by him against evil spirits, was found to be a word of power. This was especially demonstrated on one eventful occasion, when two of the sons of Sceva, a Jew and chief of the priests, attempted to exorcise demons by virtue of their name. For "The evil spirit leaped on them and overcame both of them," as the most ancient authorities have delivered to us, and from the mouth of his wretched victim the demon proclaimed his knowledge of Jesus and his acquaintance of Paul. Jesus, as his Master, he knew, with Paul, as servant of that Master, he was fully acquainted,—but who were they? Now such wonders wrought in Ephesus impressed men with fear! There in the very centre of idolatry, within the city devoted to Artemis, that which no heathen, no idolater could do, that which these Jews were not permitted to effect, Paul could and did by the name of the lowly Nazarene. Thus to minister the Spirit to believers, to heal the sick though at a distance from him, and to cast out devils by the name of Jesus, and to raise the dead as he did at Troas (xx. 9), for Eutychus was taken up dead—these works of divine power attested the apostle's divine commission, as one entrusted with a message from God to man. The importance, and the significance of such attestations, especially at Ephesus, cannot surely for one moment be doubted.

But who was Paul, who wrought these mighty works, and with whom the evil spirit was well acquainted? He was a man of like passions with those around him, made of the same blood, and partaker of the same nature. He was mighty when energised by the Spirit, though a weak dependent creature in himself. Bold for the Lord before the world (xix. 30), he felt all the weakness of a creature when he looked at himself or his surroundings (Acts xx. 19 ;

1 Cor. ii. 3; 2 Cor. i. 8-10). He was powerful when dependent and obedient, and in nothing behind the chiefest apostles, though he was nothing; and, though able to cast out devils, and to heal the sick, and to raise the dead, he could neither shelter himself from persecution or death, nor raise up a companion to health for his own comfort (Phil. ii. 27). And during that very journey when his power seemed the greatest, he felt his own weakness, despairing even of life. He had done wonders before (xiii. 11; xiv. 3, 8; xvi. 18), but these wrought in the third journey were of a special character, confirming his divine commission and the truth he proclaimed, as the miracles wrought by the Lord Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem attested in the most marked way the reality of His claim to be Jehovah. In Jehovah's house the Lord Jesus healed the blind and the lame. In the city of Artemis, the Ephesian Diana, Paul worked miracles by the power of the one true God, and in the name of His Son Jesus. Of the character, then, of the works done by this true servant of Christ, Luke particularly informs us; but of his discourses when disputing with the Jews in the synagogue at Ephesus, or in the school of Tyrannus in the same city, we have no description, any more than we have of his exhortations to disciples in Greece, or of his sermon on that memorable night at Troas. The only one that Luke gives us is the apostle's valedictory address to the elders of Ephesus assembled to meet him at Miletus.

On the first journey we were introduced to a sample of his evangelistic addresses. On this, the third journey, we have Paul's own review of his labours at Ephesus. In it the general tenor of his preaching is sketched out (vv. 20-24, 25-27), and his general bearing in that city is described (vv. 19, 31, 33-35). This, then, was no ideal sketch of what an apostle ought to be and to do, but the simple, unvarnished outline of his labours and practices, with all of which his audiences must have been well acquainted. With the words of the Lord Jesus, unrecorded elsewhere — "It is more profitable to give than to receive" — Paul's affecting address ended. A fitting conclusion, indeed. The Master had fully exemplified the truth of His own words. His servant in measure had done the same. But the work commenced by Paul and Barnabas was not to drop because Paul might depart; so he commended the elders to their unfailing resource — God, and the word of His grace. The chief

human instrument might vanish from the scene, but the work was not his—it was God's. The distinctive features of these several journeys proclaim it; Paul in his closing words asserts it. A divine work had been begun, the continuance of which depended not on the preservation on earth of the first workmen, but on the unchanging purpose of God, and on the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost.

And further, the suitability of the word to meet all classes had been amply demonstrated. Jews and Greeks, ignorant and educated men, worshippers of Jehovah and worshippers of idols, alike attest its saving power. Cities most famed for the cultivation of the human intellect and philosophical speculations, great centres of commerce, as well as rural and outlying districts, had heard the word, and from their midst the number of believers had been augmented. An Areopagite at Athens and the city chamberlain of Corinth were enrolled as converts. The jailer at Philippi and Lydia of Thyatira confessed the Lord Jesus.

God had worked. This, Luke's account of his journeys forcibly impresses on his readers. By divine authority this great movement commenced, under divine direction it was carried on, and it was borne witness to by works of divine power. Paul has, we all know, left the earth; but the work has not stopped, for its Energiser and Director abides here still.

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## MEDITATIONS ON ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

### CHAPTER VIII. (*Continued.*)

IN that which follows we have a further unfolding of those absolute privileges and blessings which are the portion of the saints. In verses 15 and 16 we have first the *character*, and then the *action* of the Spirit that dwells in the believer. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father!" (verse 15). Under the law there was nothing but bondage and fear, as we have seen in the latter half of Romans vii. The Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Sonship, would not dwell in any one who was under the law. The Spirit, nevertheless, wrought in the Old Testament saints, and made them witnesses and messengers of the truth, but this was very different from that which is the portion of a saint now.

Their individual position was, and remained, that of a servant, and not that of a Son ; though faith enabled them to see in hope the precious things of promise, which God had prepared for them that love Him.

But those who have been delivered through the Son have received the Spirit of Sonship. The reception into the house, with the abiding title of *Son*, is the immediate and everlasting result of the grace received. The Spirit of the Son of God is sent into the heart of the believer, not to *make* him a son, but because he *is* one already (Gal. iv. 6). He makes known His personal presence through an utterance which He only can produce from the heart. The cry, "Abba, Father," is our own ; but it is made through the Spirit of the Son in us. We cry, "Abba, Father!" because we know God as such, but the power of this knowledge is the indwelling presence of the Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (verse 16). He it is who awakens the *affections* of a child in us, and who, at the same time gives us the *consciousness* that we are the children of God. But this Spirit does not separate Himself from the person in whom He has produced life, and by His powerful presence bears witness that we are children of God. We have this witness in our hearts, but at the same time it is the Spirit Himself, who, distinct from us in whom He dwells, bears this witness to us. The Spirit cries "Abba," because it is the Spirit of the Son, and our hearts repeat this cry, because by the same Spirit we know that the living Christ is our life before God. And it is His Spirit who gives power to our hearts to say that we are children of God.

In verses 14 and 15 a different word is used to that in verse 16, to express our relationship to God. There, it is "Sons," and here, "children." Our position is that of a son, but our proper relationship that of a *child*. The word "son" is used in contrast to the condition under the law, which was that of servant ; it expresses the whole bearing of the *privilege* of a child. The word, "child," on the other hand, expresses the entire intimacy of this relationship.

In the three last verses, therefore, it is a question of our relationship as children to God, and that it is in the spirit of children that we call on God as our Father, and in the 17th verse the apostle goes on to speak of the further privileges connected with this relationship. We have part in the inheritance of God, "And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God,

and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him that we may be also glorified together." It is therefore not only the Spirit of the Son who gives expression to our relationship to God, as sons, but also the love of God knows us in no other relationship, and blesses us as sons with the same fulness of blessing as that which Christ as Son, is blest with. This love has made us one with Christ in all things, except in His glory as God. But before we take possession of this inheritance, we have to walk in a path of tribulation. The way to the coming glory leads through suffering. But these sufferings here are not so much represented as sufferings *for* Christ, but rather as sufferings *with* Christ. The spiritual man feels the things below, as Christ felt them, and therefore he must suffer with Him. His nature stands in contrast to all that is in the world, and therefore it cannot be otherwise than that he is troubled in it. The love, holiness, fear of God, love to men, in short all that dwells in him, as a partaker of the divine nature, is a source of suffering for him. But just this partaking with Christ in sufferings here below, assures him of his partaking with Him in the glory above. And upon this abounding glory the Holy Ghost directs his eye amidst the sufferings, declaring through the apostle, "That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (verse 18).

The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for this manifestation of the sons of God in glory. We are brought into this liberty, as we have seen in this chapter; but creation has nothing to do with this liberty which we through grace enjoy. Grace occupies itself with persons; but glory, as the fruit of the power of God, with outward things. Creation itself "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption," because it shall take part in the liberty of the glory of the children of God; for creation was not subjected to vanity by its own will—it has no will in this respect—but because of him, who has subjected it, *i. e.* because of man, who brought confusion into the realm of nature by his sin, and because of whom the earth was cursed. Now, it is in a condition of misery and corruption. But the redemption price, the blood of Jesus, which has bought us, has also been paid for it; but its deliverance will only take place at the manifestation of the sons of God. When Christ shall come then He will be the source of joy for all who acknow-

ledge Him, and blessing will spread itself over the whole creation. Until then it groans and travails in pain—(verse 22)—and the believer is the channel through which these groans ascend to God. Its deliverance will be effected through the coming of Christ, when God shall unite all things in Him, under *one* head, and then it is delivered from the curse (Isaiah xi. and xxxv). But if creation groans, which has but to expect an inferior glory in comparison to us, then it is easy to understand what Paul says, “And not only they but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption—the redemption of our bodies” (verse 23).

We not only see the groanings of creation round about us, but connected with it through our bodies, we ourselves groan within ourselves and are troubled, not because we are uncertain as regards redemption or the love of God, but because we know that we shall take part in this glory. We feel the contrast of the condition in which we find ourselves at present. “We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption—the redemption of our bodies.” At the coming of the Lord the body will put off mortality and put on immortality, and then shall we be fully delivered from the dust. But in our present condition we shall the more sympathize with the suffering and groaning creation, the more the love and grace of God are realized in our hearts, the more we feel like Jesus, to what sin has brought everything, and the more the brightness of the coming glory beams in our hearts through the Spirit.

Now have we the Spirit of Sonship, who fully convinces us that we are children, but we long after the full realization of this sonship, to which also belongs the redemption of the body. In view of this coming time of blessing, when the Spirit of God will have been poured out in abundance, what may be looked at as the *harvest* of the Spirit as it were, we have the *first fruits* of Him now. If we had already received the reality of our blessed position, then should we cease hoping and yearning for it; for what we see we do not hope for. But we are saved by hope through faith, and this hope is a reality for our hearts, because we have the Spirit as the earnest, and therefore “we wait with patience” (verses 24, 25).

Now the Holy Ghost, as witness of our sonship, takes a full part in the painful experiences in our connection with

the first creation through the body, and thus is He in us the source of feeling which reveals itself in groaning—a feeling which in its character is both divine as well as human. And this feeling as regards the evil is not that self-love of the flesh which will not suffer, but a sympathy which is according to God, and which also manifested itself in Christ. This shows us in a striking manner how the Spirit and life are practically united in us. Like as Christ felt our affliction and our misery, because He Himself was man, even so the Spirit now, as dwelling in us, feels our sorrows and afflictions. We come short of real discernment to pray in the right manner in these circumstances, therefore the Spirit of God comes to our assistance, and “maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered” (verse 26). We ourselves may not understand this groaning, but the Spirit is the source of the same. We may have no discernment to know what the right answer is to it, but God finds this work of the Holy Ghost, in feeling with us for that which is round about us, according to Himself. “He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit” (verse 27). God searcheth our hearts, and in them He finds the desire of the Spirit, for the Spirit Himself prays for us. It is I that groan, for it is done in me, and it is not I, when I look upon the source and power whence this groaning comes. What a glorious and encouraging thought that God, when He searcheth the heart, even if it is burdened by the feeling of misery in which it moves, does not find the flesh, but the affection of the Spirit, and that the Spirit Himself in this respect is occupied in grace with all our infirmities !

But if now also “we know not what we should pray for as we ought,” and that the Spirit, therefore, maketh intercession for us, then we know “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose” (verse 28); and this discernment comes through the knowledge that God is for us.

This truth, then, that God is *for* us, forms the end of this precious chapter. In the beginning of it, as remarked already, the Spirit is declared as *life*; then the Holy Ghost as *personally working, as present in us*, since He on the one hand gives us the knowledge of sonship and the joy of the inheritance, and, on the other hand, takes part in our sufferings and our infirmities, during our stay in this world; and

now we have God *for* us in His counsel (verse 29), in the giving up of His Son (verse 31), and in our circumstances here below, so that nothing can separate us from His love (verses 35-39).

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (verse 29). All, whom God has called according to His purpose (verse 28), He also did foreknow; and He has predestinated that all these shall be conformed to the image of His Son. They all shall be sons, in the same blessed position with Christ, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. God has chosen us before the foundation of the world to be conformed to His Son. Here it is not a question of salvation, or of the glory as such, but of the conformity with Christ. Every saint shall be an image of Christ; nevertheless Christ, as the first-born, as the image of God, will remain distinct from His brethren. This counsel of God is the clearest proof that God is *for* us—that He embraces us with the same love in which He loves His Son. Likewise also everything proceeds from Him—what is necessary to our preparation, in order to arrive at the end before appointed. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified (verse 30). Paul here once more grasps all the privileges which he had fully detailed in the former part of his Epistle, and makes an indestructible cord of precious pearls of it, which shall adorn the Christian at all times. Called, justified, glorified, predestinated, fore-known, to be conformed to the image of Christ. What glory for such poor beings as we are! Yea, God is *for* us! And there remains nothing more for us but to fall down, to wonder and to adore. But, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (verse 31). All things must serve to lead us to the blessed end to which His counsel has before ordained us.

But it is not only His counsel that testifies to us that God is for us, but we have the strongest *fact* as proof of it. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" (verse 32). Christ is the centre of all the thoughts and counsels of God. He was the only one in heaven, and upon earth, in whom God had His whole delight—the only begotten and beloved Son—and God has not spared Him, but gave Him

up for us who were but enemies and wicked ones. Is not this the fullest proof that God is *for* us? Can we still doubt His love? Can we still think that He may withhold some good thing from us, when everything else cannot in the least be compared with what He has given us already.

God is *for* us, and therefore He has taken our justification in His own hand. The elect of God can remain at perfect rest in the face of every charge and every condemnation, for God Himself arises for them, and annihilates every accusation. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (ver. 33.) And on what rests the righteousness of God as regards our justification? How is it satisfied and glorified, so that the stream of His perfect love can flow out toward us without any hindrance? We find the answer in the following verse, "It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (verse 34). On these inviolable pillars are founded all our blessings. "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," and now He sits at the right hand of God and maketh intercession for us. What love! How sure the foundation we are placed on! From this point we can look upon all that is against us, and exclaim with confidence—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Verse 35.) What now is able to sever this bond of His love toward us? Is it the trials of this present time? "Tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (verse 35)—trials which, in particular, were the part of the apostles so abundantly (verse 36). It is just these tribulations which seem to be calculated to separate us from the love of God, in which we meet the love and faithfulness of the Saviour. Christ Himself went through them, and He is now with us in them, and in all these tribulations He causes us to be more than conquerors (verse 37). Who, then, shall be able to separate us from His love? The enemies? He has overcome them. The heights? He is above for us. The depths? He has gone into the depths of death for us. Every thing, even the mightiest, the strongest is only a vain and impotent hindrance for him, who is the object of the love of God, and who, in the presence of this love, manifested in Christ Jesus, has found his rest!

And with this treasure of inexhaustible riches in the heart, every Christian can mingle with the apostle in the high and lofty shout of the victory of faith which this precious chapter *begins and ends with—a shout of victory, which will be the more effective the more we shall have entered into the depth and bearing of the finished work of Christ, and, in the face of sin, the world, and Satan, shout triumphantly, “Who will condemn?”* Who or what “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus?” (Verse 39.) For those who are in Christ Jesus there is *no more* condemnation, and *no more* separation. All around us vanishes into dust, but faith triumphs; it looks beyond mountains of difficulties and depths of sins. Amidst the conflict it stands immovably sure, for it looks not upon that which is seen but upon that which is not seen, and that which remains eternally. Faith looks through all mists of the lower creation upon Him who has finished His work, and sits as victor at the right hand of God and expects us now as partakers of His joy, and as co-heirs of His glory.

### LETTERS OF INTEREST.

Your letter, of May 5, came to hand safely. Your interesting question involves a very lovely feature of John xvii; not only in v. 24, but in the whole chapter. It is a wonderful portion of the word of God. There is a holy solemnity about it that deters the heart from making too free use of it, I think, fearing to make it common by familiarity, if I may so say. It is not God compelling Satan to tell his thoughts about His people (Numbers xxii.; xxiv). Nor is it the Spirit's reasoning through an apostle of their clearance and blessing as in the epistles. It is the sacred, blessed, mutual feelings of the Father and the Son, in communion about those who had been given of the Father to the Son, and yet who were ever the mutual possession of both. “All mine are thine and thine are mine.” It unfolds in the presence of His people those sacred thoughts, the result of that work for them whom He presents to the Father now as taking *His* place on earth in His sight and love; and as a consequence their position before the world. It looks on to the day of glory when they will have His place, by and by, and be with Him in it, who placed them there. These results flow from the Son having become a man, and as man receiving back all that He possessed as Eternal Son of God—Son of

the Father, in order that He might share with His people what He thus receives, which they could not possess had He not become a man, and by redemption brought them into the place where they might share with Him, as man, all that He possessed.

I have thought that it is an enlargement of His word in John xiv., "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world gives largely to its own, but it *deprives* itself of what it gives. It gives *away*. Not so the Lord. When He gives, He brings the recipient into joint possession with Himself of all that He has.

Verse 24 is an example of this, as indeed the whole chapter. He becomes a man; as man He is the Son of the Father—what He was before the world, He is now as man. "The words" (τὰ ρήματα), *i.e.*, the divine communications in detail, which the Father of such a Son gave to Him, He has given them—passed on for their comfort what was His own on earth. "Thy word (τὸν λόγον σου) I have given them." He was the person who was the perfect expression in Himself of the whole mind of God—"The Word"—the Word of God in testimony on earth. This He gives them, putting them into His own place on earth, therefore the world hateth them. So "the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them." So also v. 24, which after all puts Him in His true place: He the Giver, they the receivers—all that they receive, and the more that they receive, only serving to prove the divine glory of the giver, and rendering them capable of seeing it: His own essential glory given up, as it were, for a moment (although never given up), to be received back as man, and because of this it is said, "*My* glory, which thou hast given me," as thus received.

I would not say that v. 22 was the public manifestation of the glory of the Son of man. In all this chapter it is the Son of the *Father*. Son of *man* is judicial and displayed glory; the lordship of the second Adam over all, not necessarily so that of Son of the Father.

I was glad to make your acquaintance, even through a letter. Perhaps we may meet "face to face" on earth some day, if the Lord will. Thankful, too, of the news from —; you have man to deal with, and man is the same everywhere, and in all ages. If Paul would cite Epamenides as to the Cretians—*κρήτες δὲ ψεύσται, etc.*, which you quote, David could also say (truly, although "in haste")—*πᾶς ἀνθρώπος ψεύστης*.

## “THE SALVATION OF THE LORD.”

### EXODUS XIV.

THE Book of Leviticus is the book of worship; it gives us the principles of worship, and that which the worshipper was to pass through in order to be fitted for worship. In the case of the leper (chap. xiii.), it was not simply a question of forgiveness of sins (in type), but he had to be cleansed.

In Exodus we get rather salvation and deliverance by the power of God from Egypt and Pharaoh, from the world and Satan; and the bringing of the people on to redemption ground where they could serve the Lord, and where His presence might be known amongst them. As the Lord says, “I will dwell amongst them, and they shall be my people.” We have very beautifully brought before us in this chapter the distinction between salvation from sin, the world, and Satan. It is important that we should get hold of this, because Christianity is not negative; it is not mere occupation with sin. It is God delivering us from the state we were in by nature, and bringing us into positive blessing.

As Christians the question is settled, and it is very important to see that, or otherwise we should always be seeking to settle it ourselves. It is our privilege to “Reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God.” If I am dead to sin I have nothing more to do with it, and the more I am occupied with it the more I shall get into weakness. If I take up the question of the flesh and seek to be made perfect by it, I fail directly: the more I seek to get it out of me the more I find I am a sinner—born in sin, and to eradicate it would be to cease to be a man: for sin is our nature.

The thing is to see that I am in another sphere with nothing more to say to it. A Christian does not live to sin, nor in it; the natural man does both. Christ as man had to do with it once, but that was to die to it; and now He has nothing more to do with it. The very nature of Christianity is that I am done with it: it is not that I know certain truths, but I am dead to sin, because Christ died to it. Well, this is salvation: it is an entirely different thing from forgiveness, and the mere knowledge of forgiveness does not give you it. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ is a great deal more than to believe your sins are forgiven; that does

not *save* me. True, it saves me from going to hell. Well, is not that a great thing? It is; but it is not all. Suppose God spoke to me and said, "I will forgive your sins, and not send you to hell, but you are to stay here altogether." Would that make me happy? It would be perfect misery. To be delivered from the judgment of God that falls upon a man because he is a sinner, is a very different thing from being brought to God. Salvation brings me to God.

I would first refer you to Ex. xii., where you find the blood of the passover is brought before us. The blood of the Paschal Lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts of the children of Israel, and in every house thus sprinkled there was deliverance from the judgment that came upon the Egyptians. The destroying angel passed by, death did not come in. The fear of judgment was gone, but they were not saved: they were in Egypt still: they were in the world. We find there was a distinct thing God had to teach His people as to this question of salvation. You notice God brings them out of their course; makes them diverge from the straight path they were pursuing to teach them a lesson they could not otherwise learn. At midnight the destroying angel smote the first-born of Egypt, judgment came upon the world, and then Pharaoh rose up, and in haste called for Moses and Aaron, saying, "Go, serve the Lord as ye have said." But will that do? No; that will not do for God; there was to be something further; separation must come in. All this was from the world. It was good so far as it went, but God has another lesson to teach His people. Separation from the world is not to be had at the hands of the world, but of God Himself. It will not be enough for the world to say, "Go, We will have nothing to do with these people; they do not enjoy our things; our dances; our concerts." God must come in and save us to Himself.

If you are a Christian, and you are not afraid to die, and do not care for the amusements of the world; that will separate you in a certain way. They will not ask you to go to their racecourses; they know it is no use. But if they want your advice they will send; they will beg you to join their Town Council, or to give your name to some of their Societies. But the Lord wants to separate you so that the world will not be there to touch you. When Pharaoh finds the people vanishing in the distance, so that he is going to lose all power over them, he says, "We must follow after

them, it is too far." And he pursues them with his horses and chariots. Then says God (as it were), "I will take occasion from that action of yours to show a truth not known before." They knew salvation from judgment and death. So with many a soul now which knows that he has forgiveness of sins says, "I can go on happily now in the world, and go to heaven when I die." And he cares for nothing more. He does not know what it is to be delivered from the world.

The Lord made them diverge from the course they were taking from impending judgment, and straight to heaven (Canaan). There is another path for the Christian. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea over against Baal-Zephon" (*vv.* 1, 2). I believe the common thought is that the passage to Canaan lay necessarily through the Red Sea. It was not so. It was necessary for God's glory that it should be so, but not geographically necessary. If the world had not been so bad it would have been far easier to go to heaven. If there had been any hope of making the world better, you and I would have been spared many a lesson, and might have gone quietly and happily on our way. Now the Lord says, "Turn and encamp by the Red Sea." God had a purpose in that. It was that in that Red Sea He might for ever destroy the power of Satan. The Lord tells them to turn, and verse three gives them the reason for that. "For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord. And they did so."

That is what we have in Romans, as you will remember. That is, we do not pass on from Rom. v. to viii.; the apostle turns in the midst of chap. v. to encamp between Migdol and the sea, and by the vi. and vii. he brings them out into the joy of the viii. He is not satisfied simply with saying as in chap. viii., "We have peace with God," "We also joy in God," through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have been reconciled, we joy in God, and we can get through the troubles of this life. There's another question of what the world is. The apostle takes up that, and shows that we are

sinners by nature, and that the world to which we belong is enmity against God. Whereas in chap. v. we have peace with God. Chap. vii. is, "Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Then he shows what it is to be delivered from this body of death, and to be filled with the Spirit. That is salvation! For if I am filled with the Spirit, I am no longer a debtor to the flesh. The body is reckoned to be dead because of sin, but we have the new life, and we cry "Abba, Father." It is not simply being a happy Christian; there are many *happy* Christians, but it is to be a *holy* Christian; and till you have that you are not saved to be for God in the world. Oh! says some Christian, I am very thankful I am saved. I can go to heaven when I die. But I like the world, and I will live for it. "Go back," says God, "by the way of the Red Sea." He has this to teach them.

"And it was told the King of Egypt that the people fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him" (*vv.* 5, 6). Think of Christ meeting all the power of Satan on the cross; as He said Himself, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." In Col. ii. 14, speaking of the victory of Christ, the apostle says, "Blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man, therefore, judge you," &c. It is a clean and entire setting aside of Satan and his principalities and powers as dead to Satan and his power. He made a show of them openly. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ has saved us! It is not that you shall be saved when you die, and you live under the power of the world now. It is not that I should say—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day,  
For who ought to my charge shall lay?"

That is quite true; but a person might be able to say that and yet not know deliverance. A Christian can sing that, and more than that. As we sometimes sing:—

"From sin, the world, and Satan,  
We're ransomed by Thy blood;  
And we would walk as strangers,  
Alive with Thee to God."

What I have to do now is to stand upon the victory of Christ, and know myself in Him, dead to all this. He has settled the whole thing; Pharaoh's horses and chariots; I am dead to the whole scene. Oh! says the world, "Come, we want you to join this Society, it is for a very good object." "But I am dead"! "But all your neighbours are joining it." "I am dead." "But it will do so much good." "I am dead." If some learned man comes up to me, presenting, perhaps, many arguments drawn from history, science, or such like, I may not be able to answer them; but if I am a dead man I will not hear them.

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel; and the children of Israel went with an high hand." See the difference between this and what Pharaoh said. It had been told Pharaoh the people had fled; it was untrue. It would be blasphemy against God; they did not flee; they went out under the power of God. Then we are told of the Egyptians pursuing after them, thinking they had them. When Pharaoh drew nigh they had not learned the lesson of how God was to deliver them from the power of Satan and the world, and when it pressed upon them they were going to give in. If they had been left to themselves they would have done so. But God was going to work for His own glory. They "were afraid." Why did you not let us serve the Egyptians? They said, "There is nothing before us but certain death." But Moses turned to them (he was the most courageous of all), and Moses said unto the people, "Fear ye not; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." How blessedly he delivers them from all sense of liability in this matter! What can we do in the presence of Satan and all his hosts? Hold your peace: do nothing. But I must defend my cause. If you do you will ruin it. But I must get my weapons ready. Stand still, the victory is won; Christ has overcome. He made a show of them openly.

Now the Lord comes in, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. . . . And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten me honour on Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen." There is this difference between the world and the Christian. They only know Him when by and by judgment falls upon them. We know Him because He has wrought salvation for us, and by the way He leads us. Accordingly

we find (v. 19), "And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them ; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them." If God go with them they must change their course. It is not that I am to be converted, and then go happily on in this world. I am to change my course. The pillar of cloud went from before their face, and became a wall of separation between them and their enemies ; there was no separation before this : the Egyptians and they were one mass. It was the power of the death of the Lord Jesus ; it was darkness to the world ; it is light and a way of deliverance to the people of God ! "And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea ; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided." The strong east wind represents what we have in Psalm xxii., the wrath of God against sin. The Lord Jesus took His place there—lifted up from the earth. He put Himself in a new position. He became the centre of attraction outside the world. That is entire destruction to the world. Their enemies tried to follow them, but when morning came they were all buried there in the midst of the sea. So it will be by and by when the morning without clouds breaks ; in the meantime, sinners are being saved by grace.

"Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians ; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians ; and the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses," *vv.* 30, 31. There are three things you find here ; 1st, when I see what God has done in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ—the terrible judgment of God that came upon Him ; the first thing that fills our heart is fear—godly fear. It is not fear of judgment, but when we see what a wonderful place we are brought into, how fear should fill our hearts lest we should indulge in anything that would be unworthy of that place. A Christian without fear is not a right Christian ; there is a sort of gospel going about now that is no gospel at all ; that would make people think only of how happy they can be. This fear need not take away our happiness, it increases it. But there is holiness, too. If I have such a salvation as that, what a little thing will bring dishonour upon me ? I will fear and tremble ; and it is a right thing,

too. The Lord fill our hearts with more of it! I must watch the person who leads the singing or I shall sing out of tune. If I am allowing anything in myself contrary to this, I shall bring in discord. Therefore, says the apostle, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."

Then secondly they believed, and then thirdly (chap. xv. 1) they sing. Worship necessarily comes in in connection with this fearing and believing. It is lovely to see Moses here as a type of Christ. He begins the song; he leads the choir.

Christ Himself leads the song of victory! Who join in? Why, all Israel as one man, because they are one with Him. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto thee" (Psa. xxii). "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." We find in going through this that salvation is fully brought out—not in connection with the blood on the lintels, but with the complete destruction of Pharaoh and all his host. "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation."

There are one or two things to remark here. Until redemption was accomplished, till the people were delivered from the power of Satan, God could not dwell among them. He might come and visit His people, but not dwell with them. And does God send out His gospel now—send out evangelists to preach it to leave people in the world? No; to bring them out of it. As the Lord Jesus prayed "Sanctify them through thy truth." Now that God would gather His people round Himself on redemption ground, He can dwell amongst them. He could not do that before. At Pentecost God, by His Spirit, came down to dwell here, and now, therefore, our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. In verse 11, we have holiness for the first time mentioned in Scripture. Because there could be no such thing as holiness till there was salvation—separation to God brings holiness. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them in thy strength into thy holy habitation." Not only does the Lord come and make His habitation among them, but He Himself leads them to His habitation. The work of the Lord Jesus has broken the power of sin, and now He has gone to prepare us a place, and

He says He will come again and receive us unto Himself. But not only so (v. 15)—“Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.” Not only Satan is destroyed, but the whole host of enemies, “wicked spirits in heavenly places.” So we find in Ephesians. In Romans we have justification, in Ephesians we are brought to God. “Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance. Not only are they brought *out of Egypt*, but they are brought *into Canaan* as the heavenly country. “The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.” That is the glory of God upon the destruction of Pharaoh and all his host. “And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.” Not only the men join in this, but the women all sing that song. We have not to wait for great attainment in knowledge, all the very poorest in the assembly can join in that chorus.

The Lord give us to estimate to understand better the results flowing from the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may serve Him while we wait for His coming again!

E. C.

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## MATTHEW I.

THOSE who were used of God to group the books of the New Testament have done wisely in placing Matthew's the first of the four gospels, because it is more intimately connected with the Old Testament than any other. To him it was given to draw the portrait of Christ in the manner best suited to meet the difficulties of the Jewish Christians, and to show them that every prophecy of the Old Testament had its perfect fulfilment in Him. Hence the quotations from the other Scriptures are far more numerous in this gospel than in any of the others, and we get, moreover, far more trouble taken in the description of the manner of His rejection by the Jews than in the remaining records. He is shown forth as their Messiah, presented to them as such; rejected by them, and only then reveals God's counsels as to what should be the result of this rejection. This gospel has, likewise, simply been divided by another into three portions.

I.—III. Christ is presented as the Bethlehemite of Micah. vi.

IV.—XX. The Light from Zabulon and Nepthali.—Isaiah ix.

XXI.—XXIV. The King of Zechariah ix.

We observed, I think, that there was neither a genealogy in Mark or John—in Mark, because the thought there is a divine servant doing God's will from first and last, and consequently the introduction of a genealogy is unnecessary. John, on the contrary, gives us the heavenly aspect of the Lord Jesus, and consequently it would be impossible to trace the descent of the one who "was in the beginning with God," and who "was God."

Here, and in Luke, the case is different. All the Old Testament Scriptures had converged to prove that the Messiah should be "born of a woman"; and more than that, that He should belong to the house of David as well as of the seed of Abraham; for to Abraham and to his seed were the promises made, and David's was the royal line, therefore we find the genealogy most suitably traced up through David to Abraham. To go further was unnecessary where the thought in the mind of the Spirit was to present the *Messiah*. In Luke, where He branches out into the wider glory of the *Son of Man*, the genealogy naturally goes back till it comes to "Adam, which is the son of God."

This, then, is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

To Abraham it had been promised, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xxii. 18), and this seed is "Christ," as Galatians iii. 16 tells us. And again to David the promise had been made, "I will raise up thy seed after thee, . . . and I will establish his kingdom . . . I will be his father and he shall be my son" (1 Chron. xvii. 11-14), and this prophecy is applied (Heb. i. 5) to Christ.

Hence the Spirit of God takes care to prove the Messiah's descent from these *two* heads of the Jewish race.

The introduction of the names of four of the mothers into this genealogy is not a little remarkable, and when we consider what the Scripture reveal to us about them, surely we may say we get an indication that it was only on the ground of *grace* that the Jews get any blessing, and more than this, that the blessing was not about to be confined to them, but would flow out towards the *Gentiles*. Tamar and Bathsheba teach us the former lesson—the latter we learn from Ruth and Rahab.

The genealogy is divided into three sections—

From Abraham to Royalty in David.

From royalty to the captivity in Babylon.

From the captivity to Christ.

And here we may notice that between *vv.* 8, 9, three kings are omitted, not an uncommon thing in Jewish genealogies, to make the numbers even. This account differs from that of Luke, he, consistently with his line of things, giving the mother's line or *human* pedigree, Matthew the father's or *legal*. Mary was descended from Nathan; Joseph, from Solomon.

In like manner *Joseph* is the prominent figure here, and the one to whom all the directions are given. Mary is selected in Luke. Surely God's ways are wisdom itself, and all harmonize so completely one with another.

The *manner* of the conception is recorded in Luke, the *fact* here. The angel of the Lord anticipates the action, the tender conscience of Joseph dictated, addressing him as the "Son of David," he thus reveals that Christ is David's Son, and not merely that, but, as His name Jesus indicates, "*Jehovah the Saviour*," whose office should be to save the Jewish people from their sins. But more than this as if to complete the circle of Jewish glory, He should be, as duly written of Him, "*Emmanuel, God with us*"; thus this mysterious babe was everything that Jewish faith could desire.

The Son of David,  
Jehovah the Saviour,  
God with His people.

The reception He met with at their hands we learn from the next chapter. Let us close with noticing admiringly the beautiful but simple faith of Joseph who, under trying circumstances, acted in simple obedience to the commandment given by the angel of the Lord.

## THE DAY OF THE LORD.

IN the course of his instructions for the saints at Thessalonica, the apostle speaks of the *coming* and of the *day* of the Lord.

The *coming* is his common subject. He speaks of it in chapters ii., iii., iv., and v., and intimates it in chapter i. But he also brings in *the day* in ch. v.

This would materially dispose the mind to confound or identify the two—specially a Jewish mind, or the mind of one brought to the faith of Christ from the Synagogue, as many at Thessalonica were. And the Lord, in Matt. xxiv., I might also acknowledge, does identify them. And I might also allow that Peter does not propose to keep them separate in his argument in 2 Ep. iii.

But this is not to be wondered at. The Lord teaching the remnant, or the Israel of God, the earthly people might well have such terms or such thoughts in that condition. The time had not then come for distinguishing earthly and heavenly calling, or for speaking of the rapture. And Peter is more occupied (properly so on account of his whole subject or contexts) with the *judgments* that are to introduce and to close the kingdom, than with the kingdom itself, or the heavenly deportment in the kingdom.

Paul, however, was, characteristically, the minister of the *Church*. He is made, under the Holy Ghost, the witness of her calling, in a very peculiar way. We might, therefore, expect *all* about her from him ; and to find things that differ distinguished, things that were before obscure cleared up, and things before kept secret made known. And so we do. The Epistles to the Thessalonians witness this—and witness this in this very matter of the rapture of the saints, or of the distinction between the *coming* and the *day* of Christ. Having spoken of the coming of the Lord in the 1st Epistle, in various ways of light and comfort to the saints, and having then spoken of the day of the Lord in terms of alarm and warning, the Thessalonians might well be supposed to be put into some trial and temptation because of all this. They were but young in the knowledge of the Lord, and would not know how to deal with these communications. The apostle, therefore, in his 2nd letter, sets himself in their behalf, to distinguish things that differ ; to separate the *coming* from the *day* ; to comfort and assure themselves by the one, and to know that the other in its terms was to meet its due and proper object, and not those who were chosen, and sanctified, and saved, and called, to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And again, he commands them to be comforted. (2 Thes. ii.)

## I WANT THEE HERE, LORD JESUS.

I WANT Thee here, Lord Jesus,  
In every time of need,  
I cannot do without Thee,  
For I am weak indeed ;  
I want Thy love to cheer me  
Along the desert way,  
Thy wondrous love, Lord Jesus,  
To be my strength and stay.

I want Thee here, Lord Jesus,  
I want Thy sympathy,  
For I've no friend down here, Lord,  
Can sympathise like Thee.  
Thou knowest all I feel, Lord,  
My sorrows and my fears,  
My failures, and temptations,  
Thou "countest e'en my tears."

I want Thee when I'm lonely,  
To make Thy presence known,  
For oh ! when Thou art near me,  
I never feel alone.  
I want Thee when I'm weary,  
To help me on the way,  
I want Thy strength made perfect  
In my weakness, day by day.

I want Thee to advise me  
When I know not what to do,  
To guide me and direct me  
Where *Thou* wouldst have me go.  
I want Thee every moment, Lord,  
I am so very weak,  
Not *one* thing can I do aright  
Unless Thy aid I seek.

I want Thee too "up there," Lord,  
As Priest to intercede,  
That I may grace and help obtain  
In every time of need.  
I want Thee as the Advocate,  
Whene'er I fail or sin,  
To cleanse me from defilement,  
To keep my peace within.

I'll want Thee too, Lord Jesus,  
In that bright home above,  
Where, with Thy ransomed people,  
I'll celebrate Thy love.

I could not do without Thee there,  
 'Twould not be *heaven* to me  
 If He alone were absent  
 Who purchased it for me.

Then quickly come, Lord Jesus,  
 Oh ! "tarry not" we pray,  
 Soon take Thy waiting people  
 From this dark world away.  
 Then ever in Thy presence,  
 "From sin and sorrow free,"  
 I'll sing the matchless praises  
 Of Him who died for me.

S. B.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION,  
 CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

### CHAPTER VII.

*Canaan first ; then the Lessons of the Wilderness.*

THE people of God are a heavenly people—they are already "in the heavenlies in Christ," as we have seen. We require no experience in learning this blessed truth—nothing but simple faith. We pass through many experiences before accepting the truth of being dead with Christ to our whole sinful state as children of Adam ; the more so when experience contradicts God's Word, and we find we are, if we look at ourselves, still alive. The evil nature is still ready to lend itself to everything contrary to God. But for faith, and for God, it is dead. The only thing which lives in us, in His sight, is that new nature which He has given us. The feeblest throb of it is fragrant before Him, because it is the exhibition of the life of Jesus, in whom was all His delight, in our mortal bodies.

We have thus been introduced into a *life* on the other side of death and judgment. The very life we have in Christ is a witness that our sins are all put away. Before He bestowed it upon us, He first bore the sins which He found in the way, as He passed down, in holy love, into the depths in which we lay—"dead in sins." He then rose, leaving them all behind. He introduced us into a *place* on high with God—a fitting sphere for that life to grow and flourish.

He gives us the glory He has as a man: the *possessions* of all He will inherit. Then He looks for the works and fruits suited to that new condition which God had foreordained for us to walk in (Eph. ii. 10).

Thus, in this new place, having this new life, and being already set in possession of all things in Christ, we are not in Egypt; we did walk according to the course of this world; we are not in the wilderness; but we are in the heavenly places, which are our Canaan: "We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." And here comes in the paradox of the Christian state. He looks on high and sees Christ in the glory, and is conscious that he is in Him. He looks below and he finds himself traversing a world under Satan's power, in which there is not a breath that is not noxious to the new and heavenly life within. But having first begun in the glory, with the consciousness of His place there, he is in the race which leads to the attainment of the goal—the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. He looks at himself, and he can say, "as having nothing." He looks at Christ, and says, "yet possessing all things."

Now, there is no place for learning the tender sympathy of Christ—the blessings of a Father's love and patience and care as in the journey through. True, he must first have reached by faith the Canaan to which he has already come in Christ. Then he finds that this world is not the sphere in which God can bless him fully; but that there is no place where his own heart is more thoroughly learned, and the heart of Christ, as in the wilderness way.

In Deuteronomy viii. 2—5 we read—"And 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 thy 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."

The wilderness is the place of education for our warfare in the land—the place where faith and patience are tried, and where the ultimate thought of God in the training is that obedience may be perfect, and our wills broken, by learning to live by every word of God.

The first stage in the wilderness journey gives a character to the whole. We find it in Exodus xv., just after the song went up to the Lord. The *first* thing we have to do is to give thanks unto the Father, "Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. i. 12-14). This takes in the whole range of what God wrought from the night of the passover, until the morning when the note of praise ascended to Him from the hearts of His redeemed people, on the shores of the Red Sea, in which the hosts of Pharaoh had sunk to the bottom as a stone. Then we need to be strengthened according to the power of His glory unto patience by the way.

The salt or bitter waters of death have delivered us, because they have been borne by Jesus. But now we must taste them because we have been delivered. We must find that death is in the scene. Tribulation is our portion in this world—but in Christ, peace. What, then, must we learn? That we are crucified with Him; that the cross, in which we can glory, when put into the trial, makes it sweet indeed. Take reproach—how bitter to endure; but let it be the reproach of Christ, and how different is the taste! Take the needed discipline of His hand in correcting that which is evil in us, or likely to spring up in our hearts—how hard to be borne, how hard to be continually humbled! Now if we were thoroughly humble we should not need to be humbled, but because we are not, we must be broken down. See the thorn given to Paul. He goes to the third heaven, where no one had ever been before and returned again but Paul, and now he must have his thorn. What trying work thus to be humbled before others, just because he had been in the heights! He did not need it there, but he did when he returned, and lest he should boast of having been there, he must have a thorn in his flesh. He prays thrice that it may depart from him. It was the bitter water to Paul. But no! The Lord knew better than Paul what

was needed, and he must have the thorn. Very well, says Paul, "most gladly;" "I glory in it." Ah, Paul, now you are at Elim! You have made an Elim of the trial, and you can sit under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit be sweet to your taste.

There are three sorts of tribulation or dealings of God in the way of discipline in the wilderness with us. First—*Tribulation in which we may glory*; for instance, suffering *for* Christ in this evil world. This is different from suffering *with* Christ. All Christians suffer with Him, because they possess life in Him, and that life must necessarily suffer in a scene which was all suffering to Him. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. But to some the suffering comes for faithfulness to Christ; it is also looked upon as a *gift*. "Unto you it is *given* in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer *for* his sake" (Phil. i. 29). In this we can indeed make our boast. How far this goes beyond suffering for conscience' sake! A man to suffer for it may be a loser, because he does his business conscientiously: perhaps his profits may not be as large as those who have no conscience in the matter. But the same man may have found the pathway of a rejected Christ in this evil world, have had grace to turn his feet into the track, and the result may be that he loses his business altogether. The mistake is in judging things merely as right and wrong by conscience. Conscience is never a guide. Paul followed his conscience, and persecuted Christ and wasted the Church of God. Following Christ is the only sure pathway, and it is a Christ whom the world has cast out, and whom God has set in glory. Can I have better treatment from the world than He had? "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but *because* ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him who sent me;" that is the Father (John xv. 19, 21).

There is a second kind of *suffering under which I must humble myself*, and in which I cannot boast. I allude to the suffering of various kinds which comes under God's righteous

government, and from Him as a Father, for evil allowed and unjudged in our ways. The Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to each one's work, therefore we have to pass the time of our *sojourning here* (to which this judgment applies) in fear; there is no fear in heaven (1 Peter i. 17). How much these retributive dealings of a Holy Father with us are forgotten!

Then there is another tender and merciful order of chastening or discipline, which is more what Paul also had to endure. It is a *preventive discipline, because of a tendency to be puffed up*. The Lord knows our hearts well; who knows them better? And His dealings are suited to the temperament of each, and to the tendency of each to get away from Christ, to which each is most liable. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous;" His eyes are on them for their good, and the righteous should not withdraw their eyes from Him!

A striking fact comes out now. I mean when the Marah bitterness is approved of, as God's true and loving yet firm dealing with us, the sorrow and bitterness become but the occasion for the next step; the cross sweetens the cup. It brings to mind that murmuring self has been dealt with on the cross, and when self is gone, then the bitterness that self tasted is gone with the self that tasted it. Then the soul is at Elim with its wells and palm trees, its refreshment and shelter. But I allude to something else which is not told us in Exodus—their return to the Red Sea again. How strange to go back to that through which they had just passed!

If we turn to Numbers xxxiii. we find the interesting itinerary of the journey, step by step, and stage by stage, marked and registered under God's eye. From Pi-hahiroth to Marah, from Marah to Elim, and from Elim, with its fountains and palm trees, back again to the Red Sea? (vv. 8—10.) What do we learn from this? I believe a blessed lesson. We should be able to turn now, without a quiver in our hearts, and calmly survey that death by which we have been delivered—the death of Him who passed through its dark raging flood for us. We can contemplate it as that which silenced every foe; "The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left" (Psalm cvi. 11).

## GLEANINGS.

“If I wake in the night I am still with Him. I have liberty to pour out my awed thoughts to Him in still and fearless reverence, and my gentle thoughts in confidential love, and my troubled thoughts in prayer, and my gladsome thoughts in the songs of the Spirit. If I wish it, when I travel, I travel in divine society; when I walk in the midst of trouble, He revives me; when I droop in the valley of the shadow of death, He comforts me; when I am engaged in no defined acts of devotion—when not a voice is whispered nor a look reflected, ‘Tender thoughts within me burn, to feel a Friend is nigh.’ When I go into the solitudes of nature, I feel around me a thinking, silent life, and ‘all the air is love.’ ‘Surely God is in the place.’ I hear His voice in the song of the winds and in the chime of the waters. The earth rocks to His tread in the tempest; at His smile ‘the wilderness breaks forth into singing.’ When I return to my home, He who made ‘the desert rejoice,’ makes ‘the solitary place glad.’ I can find Him anywhere, at all times, and find Him as my Friend: in the workshop, in the loft all hung with cobwebs, behind the screen of the shaded lane, I can find a holy of holies; and solitude of spirit, where I can find no solitude of place, is often to me ‘none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.’”

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The Romans vii. condition was not before the Holy Ghost came down. The same thing that brought out the gospel brought out righteousness; brought out the wrath of God. Before the Holy Ghost came, there was not the kind of sense of sin we have, as separation from God; nor of forgiveness. Romans vii. discusses the nature only. You may put it before or after the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, but it is greatly modified by being after. In order to give it its full character, he contemplates it under the law.

## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF INTEREST.

## I.

"As to meeting in the name of Jesus,—the scriptural expression is 'gathered *unto* his name' (Matt. xviii. 20), which is a different thing. His name is thus the thing that gathers us. 'The *name* of Jesus' is the expression of what He is personally and officially. Being gathered to His name implies that this is the bond of connection between those so gathered. The allowance of false doctrine as to Him, would make such gathering impossible. But on the other hand, denominational bonds (being connected by other names) could not consist with it."

"The promise 'There am I,' is only to those so 'gathered.' But I do not mean by this that the Holy Spirit does not dwell elsewhere. The house of God—the whole profession—is His dwelling place. The Spirit of God works therefore far and wide, but 'There am I' is the LORD's presence, and gives His own sanction and authority to even two or three gathered to His name. The presence of the Spirit is not *sanction*, but the witness of the accomplished work of Christ, and the grace which flows out through this. In Matthew xviii., the Lord's presence in the midst plainly is given in this way, whatever more be implied in it."

"There is no such expression any where as the Holy Ghost in the midst, nor can we say that the Lord is present by the Spirit merely. When He spoke of 'the Son of man who is in heaven,' was He in heaven by the Spirit? In the same way after having gone up to heaven, can He not be with us on earth? Not bodily of course, but just as truly."

## II.

"I think the 22nd verse of John xvii. is just the same in principle with all the chapter. The Son has become a man, and as man *received* all He had from eternity, and all He won in time, from the Father, that He might share it with His people. As the Giver of it all He must ever be supreme. If Sanctifier and sanctified; Redeemer and redeemed; Giver and receivers, 'are all of one'; all brought into the very same blessedness and share it together—they with Him; still as the One who has been all these and more, He must ever have His place even as man. He makes us all but

divine! Yet the heart, while it knows this, is humbled to the dust with the consciousness of what we are; so different from Him. To analyse these things and reduce them to lines admitting of definition would be but to reduce what is only known to faith down to the human understanding.

"Like the Person of the Son of God, we cannot understand how God has become a man: we know it by faith, and rejoice in it. He has a name 'which no man knows but He himself,' even when He comes forth with the armies of heaven. He was on earth the despised and rejected and suspected man; yet He can say in His lowliness, 'no man knoweth the Son but the Father.' The Person of Christ is inscrutable, yet faith is conscious that He is God and man. I have noticed that there are expressions at times in the Scriptures which tell us of some of the extremes of His lowly place in life, or in death, which the Holy Ghost seems to use with purposed wisdom, and which make the heart feel that He is more than man. There are many cases of this, which would take more than a letter to look at.

"If we take verses 22, 23 of John xvii. together, we shall see a great beauty in them: the latter being explanatory of the former. Perhaps too, a little help on the three unities of the chapter may be of use.

"Verse 11 (where the apostles alone are before His mind, as I conceive; verse 20, afterwards bringing others into their blessing as built upon their foundation), gives us—

1. Apostolic oneness in themselves, and their *going out* in the testimony of *grace* (Acts ii., *etc*).

2. Verse 21; the oneness of communion of disciples with them, *brought in* by the *truth* (Acts ii. end of, *etc*).

3. Verses 22, 23; oneness *going out*, by and by, in the testimony of perfection and *glory*.

"Just as the 20th verse of chapter xiv. gave us what is now; verse 23 of John xvii. gives us what will be by and by. Now the Son is in the Father and the Lord's people in the Son. So, by and by it will reverse itself, and turn outwards, so to say, like the breastplate of the high priest when he came out to bless, having had it turned into the Shekinah and glory thereon. Then it will be the Son in His people and the Father in the Son."

## "LIKE MEN THAT WAIT FOR THEIR LORD."

(LUKE XII. 32-38.)

IN this chapter the Lord is unfolding the principles which are to guide His people in an adverse world while He is away. The first great principle is, that "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

This is a very solemn truth—the world is walking in a vain show, and things are kept secret now; but a day is coming when everything shall be brought to *light*. I do not know how far our hearts like to think that everything will be brought to the light. If we shrink from the thought of its being brought out there; if we dread the thought of all being revealed then, it proves either that our conscience has not been brought into the light yet, or that we are not walking in the light now. If that is the state of your soul your conscience is not practically right in the sight of God. If, as a sinner, your conscience is yet unpurged, there is nothing that can do so but the blood of Christ. But, as a Christian, when I stand in the light of God, I judge the evil in the light now, instead of its coming out afterwards, when we shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. As a sinner, you may be able to say, "I am a poor sinner, and the cross of Christ just suits me." That will do very well. But can you say, "I am a poor sinner, and the judgment seat of Christ just suits me"? No, you say, that will not do. But when you have by faith passed the sentence of the day of judgment upon your own soul, and applied to yourself the truth, "There is none righteous, no not one," and have seen that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," you then see what sin is before God now, as the judgment day will show it, and when you have learned the blessed truth that He who is to judge the quick and the dead has Himself come in to be the Saviour, and has borne your sins in His own body on the tree, before He becomes the Judge, you then know that when you are manifested before the judgment seat of Christ you are before Him who has Himself put all your sins away. The efficacy of redemption is the whole thing. The Judge has charged Himself

with the sins, and as He is the Judge, He must deny Himself if He imputes them to you who have believed. The work which has put them away is done, and cannot be repeated. This is what gives, not *hope*, but "*boldness in the day of judgment.*" Some people have *hope*, and think it is more humble. If there is judgment at all there must be condemnation, but if I am justified there is no judgment for me, for how do I arrive before the judgment seat of Christ? He has said, "I will come again and receive you to myself." He so loves me that He is coming Himself for me, and he shall change my vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, so when I go up before the judgment seat of Christ it will be in and like that Christ who has loved me and given Himself for me!—who has come Himself to take me to be with Him for ever!

As to judgment, there is no such thing for the saint. We shall know even as we are known, when we shall be in glory, conformed to the image of the Son; when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. What is judgment if we are completely like the Judge, and He Himself our righteousness?

We see, in v. 32, how He goes on to encourage the disciples—"Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." What a different atmosphere we have here! Do not be afraid, the Father has been thinking about you, but provide yourself with bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. The heart follows the treasure.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord." This is what gives the proper character to the Christian's place while here below—*Waiting for Christ!* The one true proper hope of the saint is the coming of Christ to receive him to Himself. Death is not properly the Christian's hope; death is not "my Lord." The hope is "not that we should be un-clothed, but clothed upon, that mortality should be swallowed up of life." Mortality is not swallowed up of life when I am dead. We are then to be "like unto men that wait for their Lord." You are to have your eye on Christ as coming to receive you; that is to be your character—waiting—so that when He cometh you may open to Him immediately.

In the twenty-fifth of Matthew you get the account of the virgins not watching. Wise and foolish—they all went to sleep; they did not watch. Two things characterise the true servant after the rejection of Christ—"loins girded" and "lights burning," expectation of His return and service. There ought to be a full, distinct, unqualified profession in us, shining as God's lights in the world. While we are here in this world we must have our loins girded. It is our place to *serve*. This is not the place for *rest*, but for watchfulness. We must watch over our every thought while here. But, what is Heaven? *Heaven is where I can let my heart go!* That is an immense comfort. Here I must have my loins always girded: here my condition is that my heart is kept in order by the Word of God: here I am waiting for Christ who has set Himself apart as the Heavenly Man in the glory that He may be the object before our hearts. I am waiting for one that loves me and coming Himself for me. He does not *send* for me: He *comes!* We are to have our hearts in order to receive Him. A man who has his hand on the handle of the door is ready the minute the knock comes to open it, and this is what we should be. This has nothing to do with prophecy. The coming of the Lord is the hope of the Christian for himself. Until the Lord comes our place is watching, and He says, "Blessed are these servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." He says to us, "You have had your hearts on the stretch, and you were right to have them on the stretch; but I bring you to a place where you are to sit down, and it will be my delight to minister to you." I not only get the blessing of being in the Father's House, but I get the blessed Son of God ministering its joys to me. What a picture of the love of Christ! Love delights to serve; and here this Blessed One says, "I will gird myself that I may serve you." Christ took the form of a servant when He became man. Is He going to give up being man? *Never*. And He never gives up serving either. He took another service on ascending to heaven—to wash our feet. He has the first place in everything, and the first place in service too. He is not going to give it up; He is the servant for ever! And we who serve and watch for Him here, during this little while of His rejection, will then find

our reward in rest, and in the feast at which Jesus will gird Himself to serve us.

In the ninth of Luke you get the transfiguration, and there you have a type of the kingdom. He appears in glory, and the disciples see it. Moses and Elias were there with Him. But there is something besides—the excellent glory—we might call it the Father's house. When they departed from Him a cloud overshadowed Jesus, and with Him Peter, James, and John. The word "overshadow" is the same word which was used when God came to dwell in the Shechinah—the abode of God. This is more than the kingdom, this entrance of the saints into the excellent glory. Where they hear the revelation on God's part of His affection for His Son, "This is my beloved Son," "they feared as they entered into the cloud;" that is not the kingdom, it is the Father's House. You never get God dwelling with man till redemption was accomplished. The instant He redeemed Israel out of Egypt even in an earthly way He could say, "I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them." Redemption is the ground of God dwelling with us, and finally of our dwelling with Him. Our home is in the Father's House, and where should I be so at home as in my Father's House? Redemption is the accomplishment of God's thought for us. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and they cast Him out, and that is the world we are in—painted over—varnished over it may be; coloured so as to deceive. But all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. The world is that in which the flesh finds its sphere when the heart of man is not with God. God has set Christ before us, and He is *the great central point* that attracts us up *there*, and everything here is against Him, for the world is where He was cast out. Suppose it was only yesterday that Christ had been crucified in this town, would you be "hail-fellow well met" with all those who crucified Him! But no matter whether it was yesterday, or last year, or 1800 years ago, *that is what the world is*. It is the same world still; and if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Christ brings out the *extreme wickedness of man's heart*. He did it on the Cross. Those that reproached God reproached Him. But all this coming out of evil never

baffles the purpose of God. Did not the cross only open the flood-gates of *God's love*? and this is always the way. There may be the rising up of evil, but it is the accomplishment of God's purposes.

If we are faithful to Christ, we may meet with much evil to oppose us. But if we suffer for Christ's sake, let us be meek as Christ was meek, in the midst of it all. He causes the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains the remainder. All man's wrath against Him but brought out the full and blessed accomplishment of God's own purpose. What do I see on His riding into Jerusalem?—that until you get peace in heaven you never will get peace on earth. In the present state of things we want the whole armour of God, for spiritual wickedness is in the heavenlies. May we each say with Paul—this *one thing* I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

If the Lord were to come this night, could we each say, "This is my Lord, I am waiting for Him?" Have you so known the virtue of Christ in redemption that you have nothing to fear at His coming; or are you allowing the spirit of the world to come in and hide your affection and devotion to Him? If He were to come, would the joy of your heart be to open to Him immediately? I have joy *from* Him till He comes; I have joy *with* Him when He comes again.

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## M A T T H E W.

### CHAPTER II.

THE previous chapter has shown us that the One of whom it speaks was everything that their own Scriptures could lead a Jew to expect. He was at once the Son of Abraham, the Son of David, Jehovah the Saviour, and Emmanuel Himself.

In the chapter before us we get *the effect* of His presentation to man. Three classes are before us. The Roman king, the chief priests and scribes of the Jews, and the wise men from the East. The effect of His coming, in each, is not a little remarkable. With the Jew, there was calm, stolid indifference; with the king, outrageous cruelty; with the wise men, unfeigned adoration. And surely, in the spontaneous outburst of joy that came from them, one can discern that God was about to glorify His Son by means of

*the Gentiles*, when the Jews would not "have this man to reign over them;" (see Isaiah xlix. 1-6).

*Bethlehem* was the scene of His birth. It had been the place that witnessed the death of Rachel; where the Son of the mother's sorrow (Benoni) became the Son of the Father's right hand (Benjamin)—Gen. xxxv. 16-20.—a beautiful figure of Him whose death caused a sword to pierce through His mother's soul (Luke ii. 35); but who, in resurrection, took His place at His Father's right hand (Mark xvi. 19). Bethlehem, too, was the abode of Boaz ("in him is strength"), a manifest type of the One who becomes, through redemption, the Husband of the friendless one who comes up from among the Gentiles—Israel returning from her banishment (Isaiah liv. 5). All was quiet at Jerusalem when the wise men came from the East to inquire, "Where is he *whose star* we have seen in the East?" And here we have a manifest allusion to Numbers xxiv. 17—"I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a *star* out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall arise out of Israel," &c., &c. Balaam was from the East (xxiii. 7); God had preserved His prophecy; long had "wisdom's children" waited for the star; and now, at length, it had come to gladden the hearts of those who, taught of God, were ready to receive it. What brought joy to them, however, was a source of much trouble to Herod, who trembled for his *throne*; and the first thought in his mind is—"How can I destroy the child that is to dispossess me?" He refers, therefore, at once, to the religious rulers whose Scriptures, he knew, could give the necessary information. Micah v. 2 is the passage they refer to; which tells not merely of His birthplace, but His kingdom. Herod, then, calls the wise men again; and, with the utmost subtilty, tells them to go and find the Child, under the pretence that he might come and worship Him also. And now they have a fresh instance of God's attention to them—for the very same star that they had seen in the East, suddenly re-appears, and directs them to the actual place where the young Child is. And now, with unfeigned thanksgiving,—the Babe being the one object of their adoration,—they fall down and worship Him, and accompany their praises with gifts of the most costly kind: a beautiful figure to us of how "the kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts: yea, all kings

shall fall down before him" (Ps. lxxii. 10-11; compare also 1 Kings x. ; Isaiah ix. 1-9); and also an example of how, in true worship, *we lose sight of everything but Christ.*

And now God, in His protecting care, warns them to depart to their own country by another way, to escape the fury of Herod. Their mission is ended, and they return home *satisfied*, for they have been in company with Him who alone can give perfect satisfaction. And surely, before we go further, we may well pause a moment to wonder at the number of instruments God uses to accomplish His purpose. *The Star* (and compare with this Joshua x. 12-14; 2 Kings xx. 8-11, showing how God commands creation in a moment): *the angel, the dreams*, and Joseph and the wise men. And no wonder; for the object of His interest was His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Joseph then is warned in a dream of the danger that awaits the child, and in simple obedience to the Word of God departs into Egypt, where he remains till Herod's death; and his faith is worthy of the highest praise (comp. ch. i. 24). All this, however, is but the accomplishment of the counsels of God. It has ever been so. He who said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job. xxxviii. 11), only uses the rage of Satan to fulfil His own purposes. John was sent to Patmos that God might teach him the Revelation; the thief's legs were broken that he might be *that day* with Jesus in Paradise; Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the children of Israel, were gathered together against Jesus to do whatsoever *God's hand and God's counsel* had determined before to be done (Acts iv. 27-28); and so here God had determined inasmuch as Israel had failed so signally to retain her place as God's witness in the world to recommence her history in the person of His Son, and therefore permits Herod's rage to be the cause of His banishment. A famine had in old time been the cause of Israel's descent to Egypt; persecution now sends the true Son and Firstborn of the Father (Exodus ix. 22, Mat. iii. 17, Col. i. 15) to the same place. And thus the prophecy of Hosea xi. 1, has its *full* accomplishment in *Him*. We see now the twofold character of evil developed in Herod—*corruption and violence*. Such were found in Satan at the time of his fall (Ezekiel xxviii. 16-17), and such has ever been found in those who have listened to his enticements.

Corruption we read of in Eve, violence in Cain; in Gen. vi. 11, "the earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." All through the book of God we find the same, until in the Revelation *the beast* expresses violence, while *the woman* expresses corruption. Herod had tried in vain to destroy the child by subtilty, he now equally fails by violence. Twice in figure in Scripture this scene is brought before us, once when Pharoah (Exodus i.) commanded all the male children to be destroyed; and again when the great red dragon (Rev. xii.) Satan, in figure urging on the Roman power, stands before the woman (the Jewish nation) ready to devour her child as soon as born. And thus Jeremiah's prophecy is fulfilled (c. xxxi. 15); and it is worthy of remark that this slaughter takes place, according to Jeremiah, *immediately previous* to the establishing of the new covenant in the hearts of the people. We know, however, that owing to the rejection of their Messiah this has not yet been accomplished.

Ver. 19.—Christ now enters the land of Israel again. He does not, however, revisit Bethlehem, but rejected of man, goes aside to the poor of the flock that dwelt in *despised* Galilee ("Thou art a Galilæan" Mark xiv. 70; "Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" John vii. 52); in fulfilment, however, of the prophecy of Isaiah (ix. 1-2) that the people who walked in darkness should see a great light. And more than this, that by dwelling at the city of Nazareth ("separated," "sanctified") he might fulfil the general teaching of the Scriptures which had foretold, by means of figures if not in actual words, that He should be the "separated" one. See Numbers vi. 1-21; Judges xiii. 5; 1 Samuel i. 11. And now we pause for twenty-eight years, until the ministry of John the Baptist commences.

## PAUL'S PRAYER TO THE "FATHER."

(EPH. III.)

IN speaking of the Apostle's prayer in the end of Eph. III., it would be well to explain a little the earlier part of the epistle, as it is important, and will help to explain the prayer. You find in the end of chap. II. certain great principles that bring out very clearly and distinctly what the Church of God is. The apostle shows that on the ground of Christ's death on the cross, and redemption thus

accomplished, the result of the church being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus which Himself the chief corner stone. In chapter iii., the same persons are spoken of as the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. You get them again in chap. iv. 11., "He gave some apostles and some prophets." They who formed the foundation of the Church are of the New Testament, and have nothing to do with the Old Testament at all. The apostle is not trying to make a beautiful picture, or to write what will sound well; but we get here in a distinct thing as putting them in contrast with those of the Old Testament. "That 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."

In the end of the preceding chapter the fact is brought out that it was perfectly impossible that the church could be made known previous to the cross even as a historical fact; it could not be until the middle wall of partition had been broken down. "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." That is, in order to have this unity between Jew and Gentile in one body—national distinctions being lost; and that they should be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." The first principle of Judaism had to be set aside by breaking down the middle wall of enclosure which surrounded the Jew. The essence of Judaism was keeping up the wall. A Jew must not eat with a Gentile; he was not circumcised, so could not eat the Passover (Ex. xii. 43-48). If there had been any revelation of the church at all previous to the cross, Judaism was over. It was not merely because of the prejudices of the Jew which we find so strong; that they were specially bound to keep up the middle wall of partition. But the church was formed on breaking it down, and could have no existence till the cross did break it down, and the Jews had lost all title to being the exclusive people of God. Now, all who believe are *in* Christ Jesus, and could not be

out of him. Until then there was no possibility of the existence of the church.

In the first chapter we are taught that we are united to Christ—the head of His body. He, as a man, was set on high far above all principality and power and might. We are united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and dwelling in our bodies. That which had been "hid in God," His "eternal purpose," is now revealed, and "by means of the church" is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places "the manifold wisdom of God." There had been wisdom in creation, in providence, in the law, and the government of God dealing with Israel; in incarnation, in atonement. But here is a new kind of wisdom, which is unfolded as the "eternal purpose of God" (c. III. 9-11).

There are two names God takes with regard to believers now. "God" and "Father." The special name given to us as Christians is Father. "Holy Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one as we are." The Son of God having been revealed and accomplished His work, has brought us into the place of sons. We are brought to God in two characters—to God as such; as a holy, blessed, and eternal being; but also to Him as Father. We have got the place of relationship as sons. Christ, as man, has taken this place, not of course as affecting His divinity in any wise. There is no truth more at the root of the New Testament than the divinity of the Lord. We find this in John xx. 17: The Lord says to Mary, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God." He does not call them servants, or friends; but He puts them into the place of sons, and calls them brethren. I have accomplished redemption, and now, if He is my Father, He is yours; if He is my God, He is yours.

The prayer in the first chapter of this Epistle is founded on the name "*God*." "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c. In this chapter it is founded on the name of "Father." "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He desires, in chapter I., that we should, as Christians, know the hope of God's calling, and the power that puts us in present possession of what it confers. The same power that raised Christ raised us; that we find in the first and second chapters. Here,

when we come to "Father" we find "every family," *πᾶσα πατριὰ*, in contrast with "Jehovah," in whom there was only one family. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii. 2). When I get the name of Father, every family comes out. Angels, principalities, saints, Jews, Gentiles. Angels, that God can retain in a sinless state before Him, but in all brought to Him in a special manner. We all know He did not become an angel, but a man. It is beautiful to see angels celebrate His blessedness—His good pleasure in man. Creation is not such as He can take a place in: redemption is. It is a brighter and fuller thing. There is nothing like the Son of God dying and making atonement. Glory itself is not such a thing; through that atonement we shall be in the glory with Christ; who could have been there but for this? There is more divine glory in that than there ever could be anywhere else. As the fruit of the travail of His soul, we get this blessed nearness to Christ as His own flesh. "No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourished and cherished it as Christ the Church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Look at it personally or individually; look at Him as the Head of the body; what way you will; it is wonderful the way in which we are associated with Christ.

The apostle now prays that we may have the *realisation* of this. It is true we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost:—"If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Rom. viii. 9); but I want you to be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." I want you to be as you ought to be: not only that they should *know what* they had got, but that they may *walk in the power* of the place they have been brought into." "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." That they should *realise* Christ being in them, not merely as their life—that was true as a fact—but that such should be the working of the Spirit of God that they should be strengthened by *knowing* Christ as dwelling in their hearts by faith. That they should *realise* His presence. They *were* Christians, but he looks for this. Their bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost—that was true; but they should have the *present apprehension* that Christ was dwelling in their hearts. Instead of letting the heart wander after vanity, to have it filled with Christ. It is this we are called to, and we should thus realise the presence of Jesus in our souls. "Our conversation" should be

"in heaven." We should live in the realisation of those things revealed to us by the Spirit of God. "That being rooted and grounded in love," we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height—he does not say of what. He takes in "all saints." I cannot comprehend the thoughts and purposes of God without my heart taking in, after Christ Himself, "all saints." He looks out to the breadth and length and depth and height, and is lost in the consideration of all these purposes of God in which He will unfold His glory. No one can comprehend it fully. How He brings the heart back to a centre where it feels at home, for we find Christ there. He is the centre for our hearts, and His well known love—"and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." I know it already. The Christ who dwells in my heart—that I have known in lowliness; the meekest and lowliest Man that ever dwelt on earth; the One who was the meekest and the most accessible of men; He who visited my heart, who entered into every sorrow—He is the centre of all the glory. The glory is dazzling in its length and breadth, and depth and height; but he adds, "To know the love of Christ." I know it, and I find that with which I am at home when I get there. It is the very extent and fulness of Divine glory, yet I am at home with it, and it dwells in me. Oh! it is a wonderful thought, "that ye might be filled unto all the fulness of God." Christ dwells in God, and God in us. The meekest Man, with whom I am more intimate than with any other in the world, is God Himself. It is eternal blessing—it passeth knowledge!

Now, mark how he is looking for the working of grace as a present thing in us—not merely the privileges that are ours:—"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think"—that is the way it is commonly quoted. People say, in His ways and dealings, God is *able* to do more than we can ask or think; but, if you finish the verse, you see it is "*abóve* all we *ask* or think, according to the power that worketh *in* us," not *for* us. He is able to do above all we *do* ask or think. The apostle is looking for the realisation of a power that does work *in us*, though we are poor earthen vessels. There should be this constancy of power. I read in Acts vii. that Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up *stedfastly* into heaven." There was constancy. Do you find this? How little we can realise what is

heavenly in prayer for ten minutes. How little we know of being *filled* with the Holy Ghost. It is not that I doubt He dwells in you; but there ought to be "might by his Spirit in the inner man," enabling us to look up steadfastly. Have you got this *stedfastness*? You will find even when sincere, and your conversation in heaven, how little your hearts are able to realise what these purposes and counsels of God are. "The love of Christ passeth knowledge;" but he prays that we may know it. "Unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages." The church never loses its place even in the eternal ages, and he looks for power that we should glorify Him now.

What an encouragement, but at the same time, how humbling. I find my wretched thoughts warring against the mind of the Spirit. The tendency of the flesh is to draw me back; it is perfectly capable of not liking to give up self. St. Augustine hoped God would not answer his prayers at once. But what an encouragement if we ask in truth, He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think." Here I find a worldly temptation. I feel fear and feebleness, but God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ask or think according to the power that works *in us*. If He is able, where is the fruit of it? Where is the victory over every temptation in you and around you? Where is the proof to the world that Jesus is *all* to you? You say that there is a power that works in you; where is the truth of it? How is it it is not "to me to live is Christ?" It is the greatest of encouragement, but deeply humbling. His grace is above all our wretchedness and feebleness; we are those whom He has called, nourished, and cherished. The Lord give us to pray in earnest with the apostles, that we may know Him who has loved us, and gave Himself up for us. Surely we owe it to Christ, if our hearts dwell on His sufferings, and the cup that He drank, and how blessedly He put Himself forward—"Let these go their way."

The Lord give us to be diligent of heart, that there may be something of that steadfastness of looking unto Jesus in us. That we may be exercised to know the faithfulness of God, and the place He has given us who are the fruit of Christ's work. It was mine before the world was; it is mine out of the world; and it will be mine when this world has passed away! The Lord give us to have our hearts filled with Him, by the power of the Spirit of God. Amen.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION,  
CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Gilgal: The Stones of Memorial in the Jordan and at Gilgal.*

God has thus given us eternal life in His Son—a *life* on the other side of death and judgment, which were borne by Jesus before it was bestowed. This life is a witness that the sins we had committed are all for ever put away. When He was passing down in holy love into those depths where we lay “dead in sins,” He found our sins: He took them up and made them His own—died and rose, leaving them all behind Him at His cross.

We have also been introduced, “in Christ,” into a new *sphere* on high with God; a fitting place for the life He has bestowed. He has given us in title the glory He possesses as Man, and the possession too of all He will inherit by and by. Thus, in this new place, we have wholly left the Egypt to which we once belonged, and the wilderness which we traversed, as we look at ourselves “in heavenly places” “in Christ.”

And here comes in the double character of the Christian state, as we have before said. If he looks up he is in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down. But he is traversing the desert as a pilgrim and stranger, if he looks below; a place in which every breath is noxious to the heavenly life he possesses in Christ. He has begun in the glory, and he is in the race which leads to the attainment of the goal; the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. He looks at himself and can truly say, “As having nothing;” he looks at Christ, and says, “Yet possessing all things.”

The first spot where Israel's feet stood after crossing over was at Gilgal. There is no student of Scripture who will not have noticed the deep importance of this spot subsequently, in all the wars of the Lord, as also in the history of the people. (See ch iv. 3, 8, 19; v. 9; vi. 11, 14, 23; ix 6; x. 6, 15, 43; xiv. 6.)

Here I may remark that Canaan is not the type of the Father's house where we hope to be when the Lord comes and receives us to Himself, and conducts us to that scene of

bliss. There will be no conflict, no enemies found in that place of rest. Canaan is a figure of the heavenlies which we are in, as a *present* thing by faith; and as united to Him who is there. All is yet in possession of the foe. The heavenlies are the abode, for the time, of wicked spirits—the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. vi. 12). We have therefore, to maintain our place as heavenly men, under the Lord, against all the hosts of Satan's power.

Gilgal has five characteristics, of which we shall now hope to speak in detail. They are—

*First*, The stones of memorial set up at Gilgal, and those in the Jordan.

*Secondly*, The characteristic of the place—Circumcision.

*Thirdly*, The eating of the Passover there, on the plains of Jericho.

*Fourthly*, Feeding upon the old corn of the land of Canaan; and—

*Lastly*, The presence of the Captain of the Host of the Lord, who now presents Himself to lead a circumcised people to victory.

If all things then are ours, there is that which we never may and never would lose sight of; nor would our God allow it to be so. I mean the way into this new sphere, and what it cost the Lord of glory that He might have us there. It would seem as if He only waited until His people were safely over, to speak of that which was nearest to His heart (Jos. iv. 2).

There were two heaps of stones of memorial set up. One, *at the command of Joshua, by twelve men*, in the place where they lodged at Gilgal. This was composed of twelve stones taken out of the spot where the Ark stood firm till all had passed across dry shod. The other by *Joshua himself*, in that spot where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark stood, in the bed of the river of death. No doubt both are attributed to Joshua (v. 20), but there is a striking significance in the difference.

There are two ways of looking at these stones. They point to the Lord Jesus Himself at the moment when the waves were flowing over His holy soul in death. And they point to Him as the risen One, who was dead, and is now "alive for evermore." They also point (for such is the perfect identification between Him and His—He the Redeemer, they the redeemed; He the Sanctifier, they the sanctified) to

our being *now* one with Him in life who *was* dead, and who lives for ever; also that as thus risen with Him, we are dead with Christ.

The moment we are introduced into this life in resurrection, the remembrance of the path into it for us—the path of death for the Lord, is the constant food of the soul. Instead of death having fed upon us, its lawful prey—we feed upon death; but this death is the death of the Lord. It was thus we received this life at the first; eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of Man. Thus appropriating Him in faith, and in the consciousness that except thus we have no life in us. (John vi. 53.) Having fed upon Him by faith in death, and having received eternal life in Him, we live by that which produced it. We feed upon Him as risen, and who was dead, and thus we live by Him. “He that eateth me, even he shall live by me” (John vi. 57). This is practical life: all else is death. It is but the Adam life (if you can call it such), and God owns it not.

The Lord instituted the supper when here below on the same night on which He was betrayed; but this was not enough. We do not (as the Church of God) eat the Lord's supper merely as thus appointed. He has gone on high in glory, and again—as the true Joshua, type of a heavenly Christ, by power of the Spirit, Leader, and Guide of His people—has He re-instituted the feast. It is from the heavens He speaks through Paul, by the Spirit of God sent down; and thus does the Church of God partake of it in the unity of one body. It had not this character as at first given, and the Church of God partakes of it, as the symbol of its unity as one body—breaking one loaf, which expresses this unity. “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (*i.e.*, His own body). For we, being many, are one loaf, one body (*i.e.*, the Church, His body); *for* we are all partakers of that one loaf” (1 Cor. x. 16, 17). With Israel, it was twelve stones, as the symbol of the unity of the twelve tribes. With the Church it is “one loaf”—because it is “one body” in union with its Head in glory. There is no room in this for the independency of the present day. There is no room for the self-will of man in having as many tables as he pleases, or each one for himself; as many have done through the “commandments and doctrines of men.”

Thus the Church of God, if obediently acting under a glorified Christ, by the power and direction of the Spirit of God, has the precious memorial in that feast (in its verity), the touching and heart-searching remembrance of the death of the Lord, antitype of these stones taken from the bed of death. We carry with us death, which once was our enemy, but now our ally, to this place of strength. She is conscious of her union with Him who died. There was no union with Him till He rose. Till then He abode alone. But also (now that we are in union with a risen Christ), we know that we have died with Him, and are now risen with Him, and thus introduced into this sphere of glory.

O what a crowd of thoughts would freely flow through our hearts, by the Spirit of God, were we to meditate further on those that present themselves as we contemplate this feast ! But we must be satisfied in presenting the meaning as far as we can in this meditation ; bearing in mind the basis of our thoughts as noted in our introductory chapter.

The other heap of stones was set up by Joshua, in the bed of the river Jordan. The first heap, set up at Gilgal, was placed there by the twelve men, at his command. These he is said to have placed himself, in the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the Ark. To me this difference conveys a most touching truth. We are told in *v.* 18, that the waves flowed on, over this second heap of memorial stones, as soon as the Ark of the covenant, borne on the priests' shoulders, came up out of Jordan : "and there they are unto this day."

Both these heaps of stones refer to Him in *His* death, and in *His* resurrection. They also speak to us (because twelve were thus used in the type) of *our* being risen with Him who was dead ; and as risen, we know too that *we* have died with Him.

One heap—that at Gilgal—was ever to be seen ; while the other was hidden, deep in the waves of the river. There are two sides, so to speak, amongst the host of thoughts which encircle the Lord's Supper, one of which the church has always—but I do not think that practically she invariably enjoys the other. The stones which the twelve men took under Joshua's command (or with us, the *church* acting under the power and directions of a heavenly Christ), are ever to be seen and enjoyed. She always has the remembrance of Him in *His* death, carried to the place of communion—the ever freshly-speaking memorial of her blessing, and of the

death of Him who gave Himself for her. "Till he come" marks its continuance. But, let me ask my reader, do we always have that of which the second heap of stones speaks? Is *Christ* always free (it was *Joshua's* action in the type) to lead us to the brink of that river?—are our hearts always in order that we may be led there? Yea, more; are our souls spiritual enough to be so led? Can He, I say, ever freely lead us back to the river—while we have only stepped to that spot from the Gilgal where self is gone, and put back the stream—draw aside the vail of waters, and allow us to gaze down into their depths, and behold the spot where His precious feet stood fast; and let us read His heart, and His sorrows—His cry!

How blessedly have we enjoyed Him speaking to *our* hearts, of our blessing in feeding together in peace at the Supper of the Lord; but have we always been let into what flowed through *His* heart at that memorable hour? I can answer for myself—perhaps for others—No!

O, for the children of God to come together in such condition of heart and conscience, that He might be ever free to manifest Himself and allow us *thus* to discern His body! That we might not only have (what, thank God, we ever have) the truth conveyed to us in the heap of stones at Gilgal; but that He *might* be free to carry us in company with His spirit to the place His holy soul *was*, when deep called to deep at the noise of God's waterspouts (Ps. xlii. 7); when the waters compassed Him about (Jonah ii. 5); when they flowed over His head (Lam. iii. 54); or when they came into His soul (Ps. lxxix. 1); letting us into the secrets of those moments when nature veiled her head; when the sun put on his mourning, and the rocks rent, because the Son of God was pouring out His soul unto death; when His heart was like wax, melted in the midst of His bowels! (Ps. xxii. 14). There in His solitary path through death's river, He stood fast, there was God most fully glorified; there to the Father was presented a fresh motive to love His Son. And He values our remembrance of His love—now that we are free to think of Him who gives us His company at Gilgal.

Thus we have death, our foe, converted into our ally in this new scene; and Joshua, in his *explanation* of these stones of memorial, takes in the Red Sea in looking back (ch iv. 23); as Moses' *faith*, in the song of deliverance, took in the Jordan when looking forward to the completeness of God's salvation (Exod. xv. 16).

## EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS OF INTEREST.

## III.

"You have observed, perhaps, how the Lord in John's Gospel acts on the ground of this, that the world had not known Him; and Israel had not received Him—according to ch. i. 10, 11.

"It is a matter of great beauty and interest to see this—how simply and yet distinctly and fully He acts on these great facts, how He turns, as it were, away from both the *world* and Israel, and as the Son imparts Himself and His life to sinners who would (though the world and Israel had thus refused Him) receive Him in His grace as Son of God.

"He is seen as a *solitary* one in the course of the first chapter: But in His solitude He is 'the Lamb of God,' *i.e.* in the character and place of imparting life to all who seek Him as sinners. And being sought and found in that character, He promises *the kingdom* to those who become associated with Him' (v. 51). 'These are fine witnesses of what I am speaking of. Jesus has done with the *world* and with *Israel*, He takes His *separated* place, but it is the separated place of Him who can give life and a kingdom to sinners.

"So in chapter ii., He refuses *the world*. He refuses to shine in the eye of man, according to the desire of the mother. But while He does so, He is seen opening His glories in the sight of His disciples (v. 11). He is the separated One, but His separation tells who He is, and that He has *divine* virtues and powers to impart or display.

"In the iii. chapter, He has His face again turned away from the world. He would not yield to the flattering approach of Nicodemus any more than to the worldly suggestions of the mother—but taking a place apart from all that, He shows that it is the place of the life-giving Son of God.

"In chap. iv., He has His back turned upon *Israel*. He knows them not, nor recognizes them in their place or rights at all. He has done with Israel as completely as He has done with the world—but He opens the view of God in His separated place. If separated from the world or from Israel, it is to give life to all who would receive Him or come to Him in His separated place.

"Just so in chap. v. He is *annulling* the prerogatives of Israel, but this is only that He may *introduce Himself* in all His life—giving virtue to the needy and helpless.

"So in chap. vi., He will not be a King. He is a stranger in the earth, and has done with the world, given up all expectations from it, will not even be sought or desired as a patron, or worker of miracles, or as one that has power and resources for this world and this life—but He presents Himself as the help and eternal life of poor dead and ruined children of men, as the One in whom and in whom alone, they can be saved.

"And not to pursue this further, in chap. vii. you find the two things again strikingly exhibited. In the opening of that chapter you see Him with the clearest and firmest decision turning His back upon the world, and then at the close of it, in some of the most precious features of it unfolding His Person as the Son of God in the separated place. He will not go up to the Feast to show Himself to the world as His brethren desired, but being separated, He reveals Himself as the source of the river of God, the Imparter of the Holy Ghost to all who would follow Him by faith, and meet Him in His separated place and character.

"Very fine this way, this picture of the Son of God is. He is apart from the world, because the world knew Him not; He is apart from Israel or His own, because His own received Him not, but in the separated place He is the Son of God, in conscious divine glory, imparting healing, life, the indwelling Spirit, and the Kingdom to all who received Him.

"Now has He, beloved, the pre-eminence in all things? Yea, and in a great sense, not only the pre-eminence, but that character of glory in which He is and must be *alone*."

"You and I are to be separated from the world, as Jesus was—but we are separated to the place of *saints* merely, while He is separated to the place of *the Son*. We are separated from the world and from Israel that we *may walk in the power of heavenly citizenship*; He is separated that He *may impart the life and the rights of heaven*.

"The Lord is *breaking up* in these days, and man is *building up*. But *His* ruined and waste places shall sing like a garden by and by."

# "WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

## PSALM XXII.

THE cry in this psalm is pre-eminently the cry of one forsaken of God. In this the psalm stands alone. Not, indeed, that we do not find other sufferings of our Lord in this psalm, but that which gives it its distinctness from all other psalms is this cry of abandonment. It is a cry to God, and that, as the psalm says, both when He was *not* heard, and when He *was*. Other psalms speak of Him as the perfect man, the one who ever trusted in God; the sixteenth Psalm is specially His language as the trusting one; other psalms speak of His sufferings from His enemies, and what He endured at the hand of man; but in Psalm xxii. it is not His enemies that are before us, though they are mentioned afterwards, but it is Himself, His cry to God Himself.

It is that solemn moment with which nothing can be compared, when upon the cross He took up the whole question of sin before God; and good and evil were brought to an issue in the only Person that could solve the riddle!

It was atonement. Not that this alone appears in the psalm, but it is its first and deepest thought and truth. Indeed, the psalm shows that there was no sorrow that He knew not;—no shame from which He was saved, nothing of wickedness, on man's part, lacking—surrounded by dogs and ravening lions, nay, man, more cruel than all, baser than all, man alone guilty, though led on by a mightier rebel than himself. All this we find, but more wondrous and beyond all else, God was there, and there as the judge of sin. God was then forsaking Jesus, because of sin. It is this with which the psalm opens. It is this verse which the Lord Jesus Himself singles out from the psalm, when He cries under God's abandonment upon the cross. God has given these words to us, as the utterance of His own beloved Son, when, in accomplishing that work which we need for eternity, He was made sin for us.

The Lord Jesus was not meeting Satan at the Cross. He had met Satan after His baptism, and had conquered him. He had acted upon this victory everywhere in His ministry. He having bound the strong man in the wilderness, afterwards He spoiled his goods as He went about doing good. The Lord Jesus had also, in Gethsemane, after His ministry was closed, passed through the conflict with Satan as the

power of darkness. On the Cross it is neither *Satan* nor *man*. It is sin before *God*, and He who knew no sin, glorifying God as God about sin in death.

This was no question with His Father. He was ever the beloved Son in whom the Father was always well pleased, and never more so than on the cross. But sin is against God, and it is this He has taken up, and He goes through it before God in death. Our hearts delight in it, and rest in it. When God touches the question of sin, atonement is made. Atonement has two parts. It is expiation before God, and substitution for our sins. The latter is not the subject of our psalm. We find it in other psalms. Both are figured in the ritual for the day of atonement, in Leviticus xvi. There was Jehovah's lot, and Israel's lot. The blood of the sin-offering carried in where God was, and the actual transgressions of the congregation confessed by Aaron on the head of the scape goat. The former is taken up in this psalm. It is the grand and most important part of atonement, where all is important. It is Jehovah's lot—the expiation of sin before God. God is seen here in all the forms of His moral being, dealing with sin in the Person of one who is able to take it up, and go through it all perfectly. Herein is the infinite grace of God—one who, when forsaken of God, had therein reached the very highest point in glorifying God. This is the meaning of the words, “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.” Did the glory of His Person shelter Him from suffering? Not so. It was that which enabled Him to endure it, and to feel it all as none other could. The Lord felt everything perfectly. If there had been the smallest insensibility it had not been perfection. In the cross sin was disposed of righteously, and for ever, not by power, but by suffering. The Lord went through it all and was heard. “Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.” The answer was in resurrection. We find it in the next verse: “I will declare thy name to my brethren.”

Death, and death alone, disposes of sin, so that the sinner, receiving the testimony to this perfect work of Christ, might be put absolutely without sin, as to his conscience, in the presence of God. Thus the work of Christ brings the soul to God—not only to the Father, but to God. Thus it is not merely love which is displayed, but in the Cross we have also a foundation of righteousness. God is fully revealed as

God. The atonement was not wrought before the Father as such. It was not as Father that God dealt with sin in the person of Christ. It was the Father's delight in doing the work, but the work was before God, the work was about sin, and the result of the work is that the righteousness of God is declared. God having thus dealt with sin in atonement is the only firm footing for the soul; without this, all truth, and especially heavenly truth, will only elate the soul, or leave it a prey to Satan's delusions.

In the cross, the Lord Jesus, as Son of Man, glorified God, when made sin. All through His life He glorified His Father. Even at twelve years of age we hear Him say, “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” At His baptism we see how the Father cares for His glory. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Not “hear ye Him” yet, for the time for this had not come, but He was always the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. And herein we see the evil of the teaching, which speaks of the Lord as the sin-bearer in life. If it could have been, He would not have been before the Father, as the One in whom He was ever well pleased. Had He been always bearing sin, He had always been forsaken of God, and to say this is a virtual denial of the personal glory of the Son of God.

But now that He has passed through the unparalleled hour, when, made sin, He was forsaken of God, and having died, He enters in resurrection into the blessedness of His own relationship, and declares it as that into which He now can bring all His people, it is now, “Go and tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.” It is not “our Father” now: that would be beneath His glory. It is His own relationship as man, and into this He brings, by His own work, those for whom He has wrought redemption; and more, it is the place He then took on high. It is into this blessed relationship and access to the Father the Lord now brings His people, and not only so, but He Himself is in their midst, leading their praise. “In the midst of the congregation will I sing praises unto Thee.” This is the characteristic praise of the Church of God, and it is the more remarkable to find it here, as the psalms do not bring out the Church's portion, but Israel's. It is the worship of those, whom the Lord brings into His own relationship to God His Father.

It is the worship of those who stand consciously in the full results of His atonement, and are brought into the same nearness to God as He is in, when He says, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God, and He in their midst leading the worship. It is the worship of saints, and not of poor sinners as such worshipping. This is peculiarly the worship and position of saints now. There will never be anything like it again. The day is coming when the earth's groans shall cease; when heaven and earth shall be filled with praise; but there never will be a day such as this. It will not be worship in the holiest then, or the name of the Father on the lips of those who worship. This psalm proves it. It is "thy name" declared "to my brethren" in verse 22. The next verse the Lord calls on those "who fear Jehovah" to praise Him. This verse brings us on to Jewish ground. It is not the Lord leading the praises in the Church, but calling on those that fear Jehovah, and the seed of Israel, to praise. Jehovah, and not Father, is the title now. The call to praise is upon the ground of the same work. "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him, but when he cried unto him, he heard." The praise is founded upon the work of the cross, when He cried, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and was heard; and now the public answer is given, in the Father having raised Him from the dead. It is the call of praise on the ground of atonement. This is very distinctly marked in the 25th verse. Then it is the Messiah's praise in the great congregation. But it is not now in the midst of the Church, as verse 22nd. We have the two positions in John xx. On the first day of the week when the Lord appears in their midst, and besides saluting them with peace, breathes on them and says, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and on the eighth day when Thomas owns Him with the confession, "My Lord and my God," and where we have no breathing on them, and no mention of the Holy Ghost. Thomas confesses Him according to Jewish faith, but there is not, in this second scene, anything that speaks of association with Christ. It is not the blessedness now of union, nor even of association; but the Lord paying His vows in the great congregation, as the Head of Israel, and they are gathered as a people round the Lord their God. Then we find the meek. "The meek

shall eat and be satisfied." They shall now enter into earthly blessing. It is the accomplishment of the promise ;—"The meek shall inherit the earth." Then the blessing flows out, and "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." To apply this now is only to deceive. It is a baseless fable now. Then it will extend to all the kingdoms of the nations. "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is the governor among all nations."

The more we examine these verses, the more we see we are upon prophetic and earthly, and not on Christian ground. We have each in its place. Verse 22 is Christian ground. Verse 23 we have Israel. Verse 24 speaks of the atonement as the ground of all the blessing of the psalm from now unto the millennial day. But now it is a little flock, and not a great congregation ; whatever departs from this is inconsistent with the Cross. In the time of future glory it will be the great congregation, and all the ends of the world, and all the kindreds of the nations—*they will praise Jehovah.*

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### ON JOHN X. 1—19.

"HE that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." *Door* there is God's appointed way, through humiliation and death. He entered in by the door into the fold, that He might lead His own sheep out. Christ entered into the fold by God's appointed way ; then became the door Himself ; was the appointed way for the sheep, to lead them out—lead them *in*, too ; but out from the fold—Judaism. He goes before His sheep, not a sheep Himself, but treads the path first that they have to follow ; He is the first to tread it, and the sheep know His voice and follow Him.

Who are the strangers ? Those who rose up pretending to be deliverers like Theudas and Judas, that Gamaliel speaks of, but the sheep did not follow them. Some such pretended deliverers rose up continually, almost every year, and led away people to their destruction, working on their passions at being under a Gentile King. That is why they asked the Lord, seeking to tempt Him, if it were lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not. God had said they should not have a Gentile King to reign over them, they were under

one now, for their sin, and such as Theudas and Judas rose up in rebellion.

Dependence and obedience marked the Lord's path. Prayer and the Word are the expressions of these ; prayer is the expression of dependence on God, and obedience to the Word is the expression of obedience to God. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psalm xvii. 4).

"It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4).

What is the meaning of "By me if any man *enter in*." Enter in where? Oh, wherever He takes us. We go in by Him wherever He leads the way.

What is it to go in and out and find pasture? That is liberty. A Jew could not go out of the fold, the fold was the place of safety. You cannot get pasture in a fold, properly speaking, you must go out to find it. A fold really was like a prison to save them from wild beasts, with walls high enough to prevent the wild beasts from jumping over. So this verse 9 is *salvation, liberty, and pasture*.

What is having life more abundantly? Why, there is a great difference, is there not, between being quickened merely, and knowing that we are united to Christ, quickened together with Him, raised and seated with Him?

Do you think the Old Testament saints knew they had eternal life? No; I think this verse 10 is actually fulfilled in the difference between the Old and New Testament saints. He comes that they might have life, and then He says it is this abundant life they get through Him. But what about David and his expressions in Psalm xvi? I think many of them, David, Job, Abraham, &c., had God as an object—trust in God, desire after His favour, obedience to God—all the elements of divine life, but I do not think they knew they had eternal life. Eternal life is only mentioned twice in the Old Testament, and both times in connection with the Millennium (Daniel xii., and Psalm cxxxiii). *Life and incorruptibility* were brought to light by the gospel. God quickened souls from Adam on, but that is a different thing from saying eternal life was revealed. We have authority to say it was brought to light *by the gospel*—did not begin with the gospel, of course. It is a different thing Christ quickening me, and my being quickened together with Him,

my being dead with Him, and raised with Him as a man, and then identified with Him as a man in heavenly glory. I see Christ as a dead man, and God taking us both up and quickening us together, that is very different from Christ as God quickening me. He bore my sins, was laid in the grave; God could not leave Him there, and He brought me up with Him, because my sins were gone, for He had borne them, and God puts us in glory together.

The Jew could not go into God's presence at all, because the veil was there, hence the Son comes, then relationship comes in, then it is there we get the authority to become sons. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Duties flow from relationships, the salvation that has made you safe has put you into relationship with God, and you must believe yourself as becomes that relationship. The Jew had not got the relationship, not merely was not enjoying it; many a Christian now is not enjoying it, but every Christian has it; eternal life is to know *the Father*; to know Jehovah was not eternal life; to know the Almighty God was not eternal life, but to know the Father sending the Son was eternal life.

God was dealing with the Jew on the ground of his responsibility to Himself; the law was the measure of this. I doubt not, for an instant, their being quickened—they could not be in the kingdom without—but in the Old Testament you never get the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. No doubt there was lust in the heart, and yet desires after God, and obedience to Him. Where they had faith they got hold of this that, "not to themselves, but to us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven" (1 Peter i. 12).

Verses 14, 15. Our version has spoiled it here: the verses should read, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine, as the Father knows me and as I know the Father." It means, I know My sheep and My sheep know Me in the same way as My Father knows Me and I know Him. In John you get the divine

side of Christ, no agony in Gethsemane, no crying out on the cross, He *gives up* His life for the sheep, no man takes it from Him, He gives it up.

It is one *flock* and one Shepherd, not one fold. Other sheep I have, not of this fold, *i.e.*, Gentiles. You never get the Church in John; the Church, properly speaking, are those that are united to Christ in heaven. You get the individuals who form the Church, but you do not get the Church, you never get them un-individualized!

Now, there is a wonderful verse, I think there is nothing like it in Scripture. "*Therefore* doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." That is, in Christ's laying down His life, and taking it again, there was such *excellency* that there was a motive for God's *loving* Him; you get nothing like it in Scripture. No one could taste death to the extent that the Prince of Life could, and did. Here was One outside death, who goes into it for His Father's glory, and gives a motive to God for loving Him—it is wonderful! In *death*, the very weakness of sin (death is absolute weakness—nothing else so powerless), in that there was such power, such excellency, that it gave God a new motive for loving Him. It is a wonderful thing when once we have got peace to see it as between God and Christ *alone*. The Lord had His own lot in it, as well as the people's lot—our sins put away, too, blessed be God, that is one part, but it is the bringing out of all that God was in His perfect hatred against sin and perfect love to the sinner; that is only brought out on the Cross, and He gave Himself up to it; it was not insensibility—knowing it all, He gave Himself up. "This commandment have I received of my Father," it was perfect obedience. You never get the Lord getting out of His perfect manhood in John; you see the divinity coming out of every sentence almost, but always in perfect obedience.

The only time that seems like going from it, is, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up," but when He speaks of laying down His life and taking it again it is, "This commandment have I received of my Father"—you get the perfect obedience as well as the Divinity.

## THE LORD'S HOST.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION,  
CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

## CHAPTER IX.

*Gilgal: Circumcision, Positional and Practical.*

SATAN has lost his prey! "He who had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. ii. 14), can go no further than death; there his power ends. He put forth his worst at the close of the Lord's pathway here; but he was not subject to Satan's power. It was sin occasioned his having this power, and there was no sin in Jesus. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John xiv. 30). The Lord entered His domain and destroyed his power for ever, for faith, and for God. He could not then bar the victorious *exit* of the people out of the house of bondage; nor, therefore, can he now hinder the *entrance* of the people into the land. If Christ died and rose for us and delivered us out of the one; we have died and risen with Him by faith, and entered in Him upon the other.

But if so, we must practically hold ourselves dead. Satan can work in this new sphere upon all that is in our hearts, if we do not reckon ourselves thus dead; this were ruin indeed, for there is no retrogression from the place of this heavenly warfare. Satan bestirred himself and the burdens were heavier to bear of old. Now he bestirs himself again on other ground. But he is cowed in the presence of the redeemed host of the Lord. He might be a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, in the wilderness journey, and frighten the people very much indeed; but here his heart melts "because of the children of Israel." "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Jos. v. 1).

Now his whole tactics are changed; a more subtle warfare than ever must now be carried on. "The wiles of the devil" are now the resource; a cowardly, hidden, plausible, but deadly strife. There never was a time when the children of God needed to believe it more than at present. You can

hardly take up a book, even if endorsed by the highest names in religion and learning, without finding an adder in the path; a serpent in the grass. Some devilish heresy, or some infernal infidel thought, glossed over and covered up apparently with the garb and language of Christ! Religion, science, antiquity, Scripture, are all enrolled under his banners in this conflict against the Lord and His people. It is not a little open power (at least around us here); but the quiet deadly crusade against the truth, on all hands. Crowds have deserted the Lord's standard, betrayed by his plausibility. Crowds have never found their place beneath its folds. The smoke from the pit clouds their perception, and stifles the consciences of His people. The very persons who profess to love Christ, and who take the place of conservators of the truth, are enlisted to stamp it out, or hinder those whom He loves from taking up the cross in this heavenly warfare.

The "world" is enlisted; and religion adopted as the fashion of the day. The "flesh" is in the saints of God; the "world" is the sphere where flesh can find itself at home when the heart is not with God. The old grossness of the "world" is abandoned: it is now "the thing" to be a religious man. The world has patronized Christianity, and is on its good behaviour. But I must stay my pen. The Lord grant that His people may be able to say "We are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices" (2 Cor. ii).

What then must be the course of the Lord's people in their divine warfare? *Self* must be the *first* thing dealt with (and that thoroughly), as that which the enemy can use. Give him nothing to work upon and he is foiled. "He that is begotten of God (*i.e.* who has this eternal life in Christ), keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John v. 18). This is accomplished by the putting practically to death all that which *is dead* judicially, for God and for faith, through and by the death of Christ; everything that savours of the "old man."

We never can accomplish this until we *first* consciously possess this heavenly life and place beyond death and judgment. This being true, we do not deal with ourselves *in order to reach* this new platform, but *because we are there*. Therefore, the wilderness was not the place for this kind of thing. They never were circumcised until they reached the land (see *ch.* v. 5, 6).

Here I would note what seems generally to have been overlooked; that there are, with us, two aspects of the truth of circumcision, as spiritually interpreted. Its *practical* side has frequently been examined; but the *positional* side seems generally to have been overlooked. Now both are true. "We are the circumcision"—that is not practical, but *characteristic*. "In whom ye have been circumcised, with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. ii. 11); this, too, is *positional* circumcision in Christ. No doubt we find further on, the practical side of it in the mortification of our members, and practically putting off the fruits of the old man (Col. iii). So also in Phil. iii. If he says "We are the circumcision," see all that must go practically; his righteousness by the law, zeal, religiousness; everything must be cast aside because we are the circumcision." First we have the positional side or character; then follow the results which flow from it practically.

Circumcision first came in, in the case of Abraham. (Gen. xvii.) He had sought to possess the promises of God as to the heir, by the energy of nature. Then, by circumcision, which he learns *practically*, that he cannot get the promise by the power of the flesh; and Ishmael, the fruit of it, must go. In him—type of the Jew after the flesh—we find what we may term *ritual* circumcision; i.e., merely the outward observance without the inward reality. But when Isaac was born he was circumcised after eight days, and in him we have one in whom both sides of the truth are illustrated. He was born of a circumcised man—this was, so to speak, *positional*. Thus we are begotten from on high, from the sphere into which Christ has entered as man, dead and risen, and thus circumcised, or completely separated to God. But Isaac was also circumcised the eighth day.

So in Abraham you have *practical* circumcision. The putting down and refusing the workings of nature, which sought to act in divine things and only frustrated the divine ends.

In Ishmael you find *ritual* circumcision "not of the Spirit," "but of the letter;" and,

In Isaac, a type of both *positional* and *practical*—born of a circumcised man, but circumcised the eighth day.

But to pass on. We are wholly separated to God by the circumcision of Christ. We have begun in the new order of things, in Him "who is the beginning of the creation of God." Then we must enter upon that order of dealing with self, by the application of this truth spiritually to our souls, so that Satan may have nothing to work upon, no material on which to act; and thus that we may present an impenetrable front to the foe.

Here the Lord directs Joshua "Make ye sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel." They still bore the traces of the slavery of the land of Egypt. "The reproach of Egypt" was still clinging to the Lord's Host: all must now disappear. This, beloved reader, is very quiet, unseen work with God. It has no outward show whatsoever; nothing to attract attention in this heavenly warfare. But in it we find the first requisite—the *sine quâ non* of all real spiritual power. To remain at Gilgal and do nothing, in order that all fleshly energy may be broken in us, seems a strange process. But so it must be that we may learn the lesson of that utter weakness, which is really the condition in which divine strength works; then the power is really of God and not of us. If this lesson were truly learned by many who go on in fleshly energy, what different results would be seen. Then we should find that if we were always at Gilgal, it would only be a step from that place of strength to victory.

See Paul: one who possessed an energy which puts us to shame. He went into the synagogue in Damascus to preach as soon as he was converted (Acts ix.); but Paul's fleshly energy was not yet broken. The Lord loved him too well to allow him to go on in the energy of his nature, and he must be a broken vessel, that the excellence of the power might be of God, and not of Paul. So he has to fly from Damascus. What a sorry spectacle he presented, as he was let down the wall in a basket! And Paul has to go again and stay there three years and do nothing. What a lesson for his ardent nature! But Paul wanted God, and God did not want Paul yet, and so he must stay at his Gilgal. What lost time! exclaims one or another; but it was time well spent, for he came forth a broken vessel, but a vessel filled with the power of Christ, and the fleshly energy of his nature subdued and broken.

Moses too must learn that, in his divine warfare, the

flesh and its energies only lead into trouble; he too must have his Gilgal at the "backside of the desert" for forty years, ere he is a vessel meet for his Master's use.

The fine warm-hearted, impulsive Peter, alas! must have a sad and grievous fall, to teach him what his flesh was capable of, and what Satan's power was, before he was prepared to go forth in the boldness of grace, and in the power of the Spirit of God. And Peter gained strength, by learning that he had no strength but that of the flesh, which is only sin.

The knife of circumcision must cut deeply and unsparingly all that is of the flesh in us; but it is a true mercy, for that with which it deals would only lead to ruin and defeat if allowed to work. If we were always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, self would never be seen, and Christ would always be seen. This would be true victory in the heavenly warfare. The Lord's Host, thus, as circumcised people, bear the marks of their heavenly citizenship, and the traces of Egyptian bondage are rolled away.

Suppose you see one who is a child of God running after fashions, the world, and the like. Well, you say, you may be dead and risen with Christ, but you need to visit Gilgal that you may practically learn the meaning of circumcision. But it is as we have noticed before, quiet, secret work with God, which brings no *eclat* with it, and has nothing to show to others; but by and by the strength of God is seen working in and by him who is truly and spiritually circumcised.

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## CHAPTER X.

### *Gilgal: The Passover on the Plains of Jericho.*

IN the Passover on the plains of Jericho we find the third feature which Gilgal presents to us. Circumcision gave it its character, and the stones out of the river of death had been set up there. Encamped at this wonderful spot, the circumcised Host of the Lord celebrate redemption once more. They can look back to the first moment of their history as a people of God, when God as a Righteous Judge was not smiting those whom blood had sheltered from His holy eye. What different feelings fill their hearts as in the plains of Jericho they now can gaze around them, and look back on the cross in peace! It speaks to our souls of the

occupation of heaven by and by, when praising the Lamb who has redeemed us to God by His blood, and thus we shall be looking back to the cross even from the glory. But then it will be from the Father's house, not the Canaan in which we now are in Christ, from which Satan is not yet expelled.

In looking around from Gilgal, we find how the horizon of our souls has enlarged since the day God at first took us up as sinners. The walls of the houses of Israel were their horizon on that solemn night of judgment. There they stood, with girded loins and sandalled feet, ready to depart from the land of slavery: but outside the houses, destruction and death were doing their solemn work. God was judging; and woe betide the sinner who was not within a blood-stained lintel on that night.

Then came the day when they stood at Pi-hahiroth, before they crossed over to the other side of the sea. There the horizon enlarged itself, and instead of knowing Him only as a Judge passing over them, a Deliverer God unfolded His great salvation before their eyes, and they passed across the sea, with death as a wall on either side, and the glory of God sheltering them and leading them into the wilderness. Still the horizon is enlarging each step of the way until the desert solitudes are around them. There God teaches them another lesson. He teaches them what His resources are in the desert, where the eye has not one vestige of anything to rest upon to cheer and support the heart, or to supply the daily need of His people as they traverse its wastes. They are forced to look up to God. There He teaches them the boundlessness of His resources, and proves that He is superior to the desert and its momentary need. If the manna failed but for one day, what would become of that mighty Host? But it did not fail; nor did His hand fail who rose up early to spread the daily supply upon each drop of dew which surrounded the objects of His care!

How the heart is taught to wonder and adore Him for the unexpected ways in which He comes in with His resources for those who trust Him, where they never dreamed they were. But He "suffers them to hunger" that He may feed them. He suffered Paul to be cast down, but why? that He might comfort him and teach his heart those deep, rich consolations of Christ which he never other-

wise could have known, so that He can rejoice in the Lord always. He can rejoice when the wells are full of water, and he can rejoice in Him when the wells are dry. "Because thou hast been my help (not that the help came, but because God was his help), therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Because God's loving kindness is better than life, his lips shall praise Him. There is no blessing to be compared with it to the heart that has tasted His loving kindness. It is better than all the favours He can bestow, great and wonderful as they are. Thus the soul is filled with marrow and fatness, and the mouth can praise Him with joyful lips, even in a dry and thirsty land.

But the soul's horizon has widened each step of the way, until at Gilgal we can survey the scene where there is neither length, nor breadth, nor depth, nor height. God Himself is the horizon, and that is infinite; a boundless field of glory. There the soul can rest and look back in peace and remember the way: it can survey the past, from the night of the blood-stained lintel, through the walls of the Dead Sea, and the wastes of the desert; until now, on the other side of Jordan, from the place of strength, it can survey the basis of it all—God's glory, and its own blessing, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. "And the children of Israel encamped at Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, in the plains of Jericho" (Jos. v. 10). God spreads a table for them in the presence of their enemies; setting them down to celebrate redemption, and think of the cross, in the heavenlies in Christ.

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## THE CHARACTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

(Read Chapter I.)

THE Epistle to the Philippians has a peculiar character, rather distinct from the other Epistles. There are, indeed, traces of the same in Timothy. Taking it characteristically, it is the epistle of *Christian experience*. We do not find much doctrinal teaching in it, but rather the experience of Christian walk; not the experience of one who is going wrong, but of one who is going right—the experience which the Spirit of God gives. The apostle is perfectly clear as to

his position, yet here he accounts himself not to have attained, he is on the road to the glory ; he has not yet reached it ; but Christ had laid hold on him for it (iii. 12).

When I speak of my place *in Christ*, as in Ephesians, it is in heavenly places, but as to matter of fact, we are here on earth, going through it—a place full of temptation and snares. Philippians gives us, not, of course, failure, but the path of the Christian, salvation being looked at throughout, as at the end of the wilderness. Paul had no doubt that Christ had laid hold on him for the blessedness, but he had not got there. Salvation is always looked at as at the end of the journey.

It makes it so much the more remarkable as to the Christian path, that you never find *sin* mentioned from beginning to end of the Epistle. The thorn in the flesh was needed when Paul came down from Paradise, so it was not that the flesh had got any better. The thorn was something to hinder sin, something that made him outwardly contemptible in his ministry. Every one would probably have a different thorn, according to his need. There is no change in the flesh, but the power of the Spirit of God is such that the flesh is kept down. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus” would not be necessary if the flesh were any better. It is not that there is any uncertainty as to salvation or acceptance, but that we should so walk through the wilderness, that the flesh should be shut up, as it were.

God looks at us as dead with Christ, and we are called on to reckon ourselves dead. I have a title to do it, because Christ has died, and I am crucified with Him. It is not only that we are born of God, but we have died with Christ.

In Col. iii. you find *God* seeing us dead. In Rom. vi. *I* reckon myself dead. In 2 Cor. iv. it is “always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” This is going very far indeed. Death to Paul was so realized that the life of Christ only worked in him.

In Phil. i. you find the position and practical life of a Christian in this scene. In chap. ii. you have the pattern of Christ come down ; in chap. iii., the energy that carries the Christian through this world, all things being counted but dross and dung, that he may win Christ (here Christ is looked at as One who is to be had as his gain in the glory). In chap. iv. you get the Christian’s superiority to all circum-

stances. We have in this epistle the whole character of Christian life, and that assumes that our place in Christ is settled.

Assuming that Christ has borne our sins, and that we are dead with Him, we find on that foundation the unfolding of the path of the Christian, the manifestation of this life, which we have from God (a thing that John looks at abstractedly in itself. "He that is born of God doth not commit sin.") The Christian is to manifest the life of Christ, and nothing else. "*Ye are* (not "*ought to be*") the epistle of Christ." Let Christ be read in you, as plainly as the law in the tables of stone. As Christ represents us before God, so you appear in the presence of the world for Christ. It is a great thing to say that my heart is full of Christ, that nothing but Christ appears. If I am in lowliness of heart before Him, "living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," I shall manifest Christ.

The moment a Christian looks at himself in Christ, there are no "ifs," but when he looks at himself in the wilderness there are "ifs"; not that there is the smallest uncertainty, but to keep us in dependence. "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," no doubt here, but in dependence. "If ye hold fast the beginning of your confidence stedfast to the end"—if *I* hold fast. I am not to be trusted—it's positive dependence. Every moment I learn that. The mischief of the state of the heart is that, as to *will*, man has become independent. The great thing for us is to be absolutely dependent on infallible faithfulness, on unwearied love, to carry us through. The heart is brought back to blessed dependence—the dependence is blessed; but the sense of His faithful love is unfailing joy and rest. It is not that the "if" is not true, but the Father's hand will never let go His child. We have grace to help in every time of need. Without Him we can do nothing; with him, in a certain sense, *everything*. Thus we learn that we can never excuse ourselves, if we let the flesh act. The existence of the flesh does not give a bad conscience, otherwise we should never have a good one.

The question for you, as Christians, is—are you walking in the light, as God is in the light—God is light and love—His essential names? You are brought to God without a veil, and there is light on everything you do. God had brought us to know Christ, "This is my beloved Son." That is what

I delight in. The more you look at Him, the more you see, that is the place God has brought us to. If heaven opened on Him, it opens on *us*. If God owns Him as Son, He owns us as sons. Now we have to learn Christ. Has Christ had such a place in your hearts to-day, that the things which spring from Christ, spring from you? Have you understood that Christ has bought you to Himself? Now especially it is important that Christians should be Christians. What He was before God was perfection itself reproduced before man, and all to please His Father. Are you learning Christ, beloved friends? When I look at Christ, I see God manifested in a man in this world, the expression and pattern of what God delighted in. I am not before God on the ground of what I have done, or what I am, but on the ground of what Christ has done, and what He is. There is for us this continually learning Christ. God has been revealed to us; we have seen what He is—seen it in a light to love it. It is not an effort that I may become more like Christ, but that, according to the knowledge of Him I have received, there should be nothing contrary to that knowledge. I do not expect a babe to be a man: when we see a babe delighted in its mother, and obedient, it is just as delightful in its way as to see a man saying, “That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be my life or death”—in all that he came across, Christ would be glorified in his body.

The Christian, having his eye on Christ, knows no standard but Christ in glory. We are to be “conformed to the image of his Son.” This is the blessed hope of the Christian, and nothing short of it. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” There is no doubt, no uncertainty of our having it, or of what it is. Christ is the first-born amongst many brethren—they like Him. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. I see Christ up there. I get this unspeakably simple truth, that when I was a poor sinner, another man stepped in, and set me free. “Let these go their way,” Christ said of His disciples. He takes the whole thing on Himself, and He is to be the judge. The perfect good of God, and the perfect evil of man, met at the cross—everything was settled there. The new heavens and the new earth depend on the cross. The man who was

there made sin, is now sitting on the right hand of God in glory. The Holy Ghost comes down: lets me know that my place is settled before God. A sinner cannot have confidence, if sin is not put away. There *HE* is, the pattern of what I am to be—our forerunner. I am going to bear the image of the heavenly; I want to attain *that*—to win Christ, to be like Him for ever. The treasure is indeed in the earthen vessel, but I *have* the treasure. I never rest till I am like Christ in glory. Christ is my life; that life lives on Christ as its object. I *am* going to be like Him; I shall never be satisfied till then. The Spirit of God enables us to realize this in our hearts in power.

How perfectly is the Apostle's heart at rest! He says (v. 15, &c.), "Some preach Christ even of envy and strife." Never mind, if Christ is preached! What peace of heart he had! He had been in prison four years, in the most trying circumstances. All this, he says, shall turn to my salvation.

Verse 23. "To depart and be with Christ is far better, nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you," so completely happy, so completely settled, that he does not know what to choose; self is gone. It would be worth while to stay, because I can labour for Christ—Christ loves the Church—then I *shall* stay. With him it was labouring for Christ or living with Christ. Christ had such a place that the power of circumstances disappears. How near he lives to Christ! There was not perfection—not yet—but he had Christ completely as his object—he was living up to Christ in the measure in which he had attained.

We may have learned a blessed truth, as Peter did, revealed by the Father, a real revelation—I do not question that—but the flesh may not be broken down, up to the measure of what we have been taught. Peter was doing Satan's work, and Christ said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Would not Christ have to call you "Satan" in something? If we are not bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus, our condition of soul is not up to the measure in which we have been taught.

Have you the true *desire* to be this? Is there a chamber locked up in your heart? Christ will open it some day. Search me thoroughly, O God, and know my heart, and lead me into the way that is everlasting. The Lord grant us wisdom to understand His love!

## FRAGMENT.

God would not have us always occupied with the manifestation of His grace to us in salvation—blessed as that is. He would have us able to receive communications of what *He Himself is*. Many things hinder this. Not perhaps sinful things. It may be even *activity* for Christ: one might be so occupied with their work as to hinder this communion. This activity ought to flow from communion—being so filled with what Christ is, that we must tell it out to others.

But, besides this, there are our failures, and God has to make them known to us; and to make us see what grace is in respect of such: yet this is not communion.

It is when we have such a communication of what He is poured into our souls, that we are led to exclaim "What a God Thou art!"

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"SEEN OF ANGELS."

Angels in beholding Him, had treasured up what He had said (Luke xxiv. 9, 22), which had not been done by His disciples.

Verse 17.—The two going to Emmaus were filled with sorrow; but see the cause—"We trusted that it was He that should *deliver Israel*." It was *self* that occupied them—not Christ. But His answer shows that "*His glory*,"—not Israel merely—that was God's object. How very dull the disciples were! He had often told them of His sufferings, but they believed it not: now He was about to enter upon *His* glory. Then He opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures: they all speak of Him. He would encourage nearness and familiarity in them too. "Handle me and see," He says. Try Him and test Him; as it were, bring the bill to Him, and see if He will not honour it. How slow are the hearts of His own to do this! and yet He would have it so.

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## THE DAYSMAN.

## JOB IX.

IN the Book of Job we find the trials which God sent Job for his good; and the way in which his patience broke down under them. He is celebrated for patience, but he cursed the day that he was born. It teaches us how good is not to be found in the heart of man. In the end however (when broken down) God blessed him. It shows how blessing comes, and must come, in real knowledge of self. People speak of God's goodness, but their only thought of it is His passing over all that they are with indifference: that is not the way God is good. If you were to take half the people that are round us and put them into heaven really, they would get out of it as fast as they could; they have no feeling in accordance with it, nothing is there that they like. Everybody likes to be happy. If you take the reality of the thing there is not in the natural state of each of us anything that would find a single thing there that we like. God knows that and says, man must be born again. He is full of patience, but it is not goodness that passes over iniquity, which is not possible in a holy God; but He brings us (and may it be so with you), to a definite knowledge of what we are, and what we have done, for He is above all the evil, but He must have what is in man exposed before Him. Some men's sins go before to judgment, open to all to see that they are laying up a store of judgment. All must pass away; "the fashion of this world passeth away," and yet people are occupied with them; pleasure, gain, and so forth, and everything that is real comes after: sin is real of course. The things that are seen are temporal; what is seen everybody knows, and all must go to nothing. Men are responsible; all that they are occupied with is done with when death comes in; they themselves are not done with, but the life and objects they are occupied with are over; everybody knows it—folly is bound up in our hearts. Men cannot tell what will come after in a future day.

We do not want revelation to know what is in this world; when we pass beyond it we do want a revelation; we want God to tell us and bring down to such as we are, a sure certain testimony that when all the fashion of this world passeth away, what will be then. He has done it, only it is another thing to have hearts inclined to things that are

eternal. He has given us a full and complete revelation of our state here as sinners, and what His holiness is—God's way of meeting man, rather the revelation that He has met us and given us sure and certain blessedness. Many say you cannot be sure. Now it is not true, God would not have us (if we are His) walking in uncertainty and misery. We have not the spirit of bondage but the Spirit of adoption by which we cry Abba, Father; we know relationship with God as children, He has fully revealed it—I speak of Christians of course.

The Lord was dealing with Job to bring him into the sense of this favour, and he had to learn himself; it is what makes the book so interesting. He was not a Jew, nor was he a Christian; it is bringing out the wants of the soul. He is different from us in that he had not got what we have got, that is Christ. He is in bitterness of spirit, ploughing up the ground; at the end of the book you get his blessing when he is brought to a knowledge of himself. Everything works for his good. Job was not a wicked man; there is grace for the most wicked; he was quite the contrary. There is a spirit of self-righteousness in him, and God let Satan loose at him, and for a long while he went on better than ever, and asks "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Suppose God had stopped there, and that he had got no exercise or trial after that, the effect on Job would be worse than ever. He might have said—When I was in prosperity I was gracious, "when the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw it gave witness to me," and now I am patient in adversity.

It goes on till his friends come, then he breaks down and curses the day he was born. Now says God, what have you got to say for yourself? That was an humbling thing; we often see it in not saying right things of God. If I could meet God, like you He would put words in my mouth. There was at bottom a right thought of God, but all this scum was coming up to make him know himself. The friends took false ground; they took the world and Job's case in especial, as adequate testimony of the open government of God, and said he had been a hypocrite. No, says Job, I will not give up my integrity. Job says the wicked get put down, but other men die in comfort though just as wicked. The world is no adequate witness of the government of God; and we have clearer light of such in Christianity. You see a

soul struggling with self and speaking against God, because it has not found Him in the light—the flesh breaking out so that Job should know it. There is no need for that in many cases, because there is open wickedness.

Job having been exercised, we get what he passes through as to how he should meet God. They had been telling him God hated iniquity, of course He does—"But how should man be just with God?" The righteous Lord loveth righteousness: are we righteous? that's another story. God requires righteousness, but are we in that condition when we have to do with God not with man? could we say, I am righteous before Him? that is the question. There is many a person who looks to the cross and says, I have no hope in myself, I am a poor sinner; all my hope is in the cross. I say to such, Put yourself before the judgment seat, and can you say, the judgment seat suits me? Ah, that will not suit! Many do look to the cross; but put them honestly before the judgment seat, and the soul is not at peace. When we know Christ is our righteousness, there is no place where our souls are so clear as at the day of judgment, because if we are the righteousness of God in Him, what can judgment do but prove that righteousness? We shall be in glory then.

To go on, the soul does not walk in peace that has not realized in the presence of judgment, as a present thing, what it is to be in righteousness before God now. It cannot walk in peace because it is awakened. We see it in a striking way in this chapter. There are haughty expressions; flesh breaking out, that he might learn himself; the soul put through right thoughts and wrong thoughts. First, God loves righteousness (substantially I mean), Job answers, I know it is so of a truth, but how can man be just with God? He can in his *own* eyes; but if He contend with me, I cannot answer Him one of a thousand, he says. The instant the soul is awakened to see with God's eye he sees in the light, the moment the light of God has shone into his soul, the soul is in presence of judgment in the light; now he says, I could not answer Him for one of a thousand. I could not answer for things I have done: could *you*? He is infinitely good, but cannot allow evil.

Could *you* answer Him, speaking of righteousness, for everything you have ever done or thought? Do *you* not expect to give an account of yourself? Have *you* nothing

you could not answer for? It is not so we know perfectly well. If you take all that passes in your heart, all that you are from your youth up, what would it be? We all live in a vain show, we have characters which God cares nothing about, but He does care about conscience. He has given a blessed remedy for it all before judgment comes.

Not speaking now of Christ as your righteousness, could you stand up and say that is not true of you? No you could not answer Him one of a thousand. When you come before God He is not a man that you can contend with Him.

Job goes through several of these cases, he had not all the light we have of course, or he would not trust himself, all that mixture, and want of confidence in God—"let not His face terrify me"; then his wrong feeling breaks out—"He breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause, He will not suffer me to take my breath but filleth me with bitterness"; "if I justify myself my own mouth shall condemn me, if I say I am perfect it shall also prove me perverse."

If you begin to justify yourself your own heart condemns you. You cannot justify yourself in God's presence, then what is the good of doing it anywhere else? Your own mouth condemns you, you could not stand in the light and you know it perfectly well.

After that he goes on, "If I say I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness and comfort myself, I am afraid of all my sorrows." You are so melancholy you cannot get on.

How comes it that thinking of God makes man melancholy? For the moment it does, and with good reason too. The light coming in terrifies him; what folly to hide his eyes from it when it must come in! It is self-deception. Is that a good thing to go on with? "I am afraid of all my sorrows." God is breaking up his heart in consciousness of it. There is no such thing as innocence, we all know we have done evil. Are you going to carry that to heaven, and that is the breaking up of the heart—his heart being broken up—the crust of his heart. Now, "if I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands ever so clean:" he is going to cleanse himself. "Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me:" If I have the thought of cleansing myself, I am like a man taken out

of a ditch. So much for man's thoughts, men are deceiving themselves. Suppose a man is brought up in a dirty house, he does not feel it, his mind is as dirty as his house. As sinners in a sinful world our habits of thought are according to man, not God.

It is dreadful; nothing proves more the ruin of man than his judgment of good and evil. A thief man thinks very bad; all that kind of thing is thought unfit for society. Suppose a friend of yours hates God in his heart; yet he is the best friend you have perhaps. If we only look things in the face, we are living in deceit.

Go through the history of all religion. Is the Mahomedan ashamed of his religion? *Never!* Are men ashamed of Juggernaut? of anything that is false? You *never* find men ashamed of false religion. Take the Christian, he is ashamed of confessing Christ. How comes that? Real Christians! "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." How is it man is not ashamed of false religion? What a tale it tells of the world. Men may sing songs in the street; but when you get the light of God, and speak of God in the world, it is not borne with. When we come to the exercises of our own souls this comes up to the conscience.

If I talk of making myself clean, Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. Some sin grossly; some in the secret of their own heart. Many I trust know it in grace, it is true of all of us, and are we to be with God unrighteous? It is true of me as of you, none of us could stand for a moment. Job takes these different cases and tries to comfort himself, but finds he is like a man out of a ditch, struggling as to this. Then he says, I want some one between me and God. "Let him take his rod away from me"; he was exercised; he had not what we have in Christ. God has taken away His rod, and we have a Daysman, just what God has given us in Christ. Was Christ a terror in this world? The law was. Moses says, "I exceedingly fear and quake," and the people says, Do not let God speak to us. But it produced no real effect, it did not change the heart, it gave no confidence in God, no trust in God. The law threatens to curse, but not give strength, nor an object that wins the heart.

If you say you are a sinner, very well, says the law, you are cursed (Rom. vii). I do this though I hate it; so do I

says the law, that's the reason I am cursing you. It is a perfect rule—To whom? It is a perfect rule for a sinner. Are you a sinner? Yes, if you are in your sins, can I bring a just measure and say that it will inspire you with confidence? It detects a person, "By the law is the knowledge of sin," a good thing to get it, that is what Job is getting here. Job was a converted man, but sin was brought to his conscience, and that never gives a man confidence, it brings us into the truth and is very useful, when we look to the Lord Jesus the soul is brought to a point like Abel. Cain says, I can worship God. It proved utter insensibility to his sinfulness, and that the curse had come in. Why should he labour and toil to be received of God? How come you to be away from God? How did judgment come in? Was there need to judge Adam innocent? He had left God, and *therefore* there was judgment; there is no need of judgment if we are as God made us—judgment is necessarily condemnation. If I make this desk and I judge it, I judge myself, for I made it; if it is broken that is not my fault. We turn God into a judge instead of a blessing, because we have left Him. Cain had no sense of it, but thought he would go and do his duty. He had no sense of being an outcast sinner. Abel brings a victim—death comes in. If I have not got something that has borne death and wrath, I cannot come to God at all. He had the sense of need because he had the sense of sin.

If we look at Christ, He meets the very thing Job felt the want of. I cannot go to God myself; if I pretend to be righteous I am proved to be perverse. What have we got in Christ? I have God come to me in this world because I could not go to Him—entirely another thing. His terror taken away. He did not stay up in heaven and say, Come before the judgment seat. He says There is none righteous, no, not one, and He comes to these unrighteous people. He does not stay in heaven and say, "Come"; but He says it on earth. What I get in the Daysman is God showing me that He is above all my sin. He is light and shows the sins where everything is manifest, in man's heart and conscience. He has come as a fact into the world where men were sinners—proved in their own consciousness. I have this truth, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses. He has visited me, not to hide my sins from me, but come into this world to put them

away ! He will come and talk to me ; allow me to wash His feet, like the woman in the Pharisee's house. If it was judgment of course it would terrify me, but it is not judgment, but the perfect blessed love of Man among men—the holy One who could not be defiled. He used the undefilableness of His nature to carry His perfect love of God to sinners, not concealing the sin. One with the Father, one with man down here, that I might see God in Him. I have this blessed truth that God has visited me just as I am. Not that I go to Him just as I am, but He comes to me. His source of all was in the heart of God, when I was not thinking of Him : going on in my sins, God comes to the sinner and makes him feel his sin. Are you so bad that nobody will trust you ? You cannot show yourself to anyone though you can show yourself to me. I will not turn you out, I am come to seek and to save the lost. Can He wait for the day of judgment for that ? He did it before the day of judgment.

The beginning of all sin was losing confidence in God. If I cannot trust God to make me happy I must trust myself ; man lost confidence in God, and Christ came to say, Now you may have confidence in me no matter how bad you are. How blessed to trace Him going through the world ; the poor woman is astonished that He talks to her. Did He ever reproach her ? He came to bring blessings. The time will come when there will be judgment. Instead of waiting to the day of judgment, He has come into the world as a Saviour before judgment. God has come to say, I will save every poor soul who believes in Me. I am come because you are a sinner. I am come in the day of grace to you in your sins. What a way of dealing that is ! God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing trespasses.

Did you ever see terror in it. To a Pharisee He gives a most withering rebuke. Did you ever see in Christ—God in this world—anything but love to lost sinners ? I find divine love in that blessed One. Who put it into God's heart to do this ? Did the world seek Him ? Not they ! They would not have Him. Who put it into His heart ? Nobody but Himself : His own heart was the source of it all !

I get to know God much better than I know myself. I cannot trust my own heart it is so deceitful. If I say I love the brethren, and I do, I find coldness springing up ; the

moment I know Him there is no shadow of it in Him. He is the Daysman who lays His hand on us both, and has come into a world of sinners just as they were, passing through the world as the One to meet every want in it.

Then sin must be put away; we could not go to heaven in our sins. I get in the cross, in that sense, not God before man in the world, but man (He lays His hand upon us both) before God, made sin. He is on the cross to be dealt with, stands there just as He stood before man, to show love, that He might be dealt with according to that. The insults He had to endure from man; all that He took in meekness, but He could not take the wrath of God in that way. It was strong crying and tears then, and He was heard because of His piety; if possible He would have had that cup pass from Him, but if any of you were to be saved that cup must be drank.

In 2 Cor. v. you get both (19 to 21); first, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses"; second, "for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I am the righteousness of God in Christ, as God He came in love to us here, and as man He has gone up in righteousness to God up there.

Suppose I follow Christ's path a little: I find all these people He has been blessing crying, "Crucify him, crucify him": the judge that ought to have protected the innocent washing his hands; the friends all running away, one betraying Him, another denying Him, no man to have compassion. I find Him setting His face as a flint, bowing to the Father's will; I find Him on the cross, lifted up from the earth, and there made sin; but in Him was no sin. I brought Him there; my vile sins, my wickedness, my rejection of Him has brought Him there. If they have they are gone. Ah! what has come; He has put away sin, He was there, not as a judge but being judged; there is nothing like that atonement. I find the only one righteous Man forsaken of God.

The moment I get Christ there everything is shut out, and He is made sin before God—perfectly glorifying God as well as bearing sin. There only obedience was perfect, because fully tested, and there came out the sweet savour. There was no glorifying God perfectly except on the cross. There I get the whole righteous indignation of God against sin. He had no patience with Him, no gentleness with Him as

there is with us. It was really drinking the cup of perfect judgment against sin, and showing perfect love to the sinner.

If I pass over the sin, people would say that is goodness ; but I find God's righteousness against sin, and in that perfect love to the sinner, I see the enmity of man against God, and perfect love towards those very men—God perfectly glorified. Terror there was, but not on me, man's utter sinfulness learned in the act that put it away. Law will condemn the sinner, but you never get sin dealt with except on the cross. I find Him alone with God when in unutterable love He put all sin away, and when I go to God now I find Him there, the witness of having put away sin, and I can come as white as snow.

Let us go a step further to see the efficacy of it, let us go further in this journey. Suppose a man convicted of sin going to God, going to judgment in faith—Who does he find there? That very person who put away his sins. When he stands before the judgment seat there is the very One who put all away. It is impossible He could impute sin.

Then He comes and changes our vile bodies and makes them like His glorious body—we are raised in glory. To get before the judgment seat I must be raised, and I get there in glory. I am not talking of those who neglect this great salvation of course. Christ comes Himself, is not satisfied to send, and takes us up, raised in glory. We must give an account of ourselves, but I am there, in glory. The *first* coming was about putting away sin (Heb. ix.), "but unto them that look for him shall he appear the *second* time, without sin unto salvation." He has nothing more to do with it. He appears the second time, what for? To salvation. He came first to put away sin, and then He has nothing more to do with that, and He comes the second time unto salvation.

If you have not got it you want simple earnest faith. He is at the right hand of God, having perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. x). He brings the love down to me where I am. He came in grace into this world of sin, and has gone into heaven in righteousness, to sit at God's right hand. Nothing in my heart put it into God's heart. The question with me is, in that dark hour did He finish the work God gave Him to do? I believe He did. I now look up to Him as having accomplished the work. He is sitting

there—God is resting, having accomplished the work—and I come to God by Him.

Abel's sacrifice was a figure of it. He had the witness that he was righteous, God testified of his gift. I come with the lamb in my hand—Christ—owning I am an utter sinner, my heart is conscious that I could not answer Him, I would be like a man taken out of a ditch; but I have got a Daysman: God has rest, and so have I!

Another thought; it carries the blessedness further, that we are in Him through the Holy Ghost sent down. He not only appears for me, but I am in Christ, "in the Beloved." In the seventeenth of John He says, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." If I have looked to this Daysman I have got to the spring of God's heart. He has given His Son for me, and as a consequence He will give me everything.

The next thing He is righteous. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He has looked at it in Christ and all is finished, my soul rests in the knowledge that He has loved me enough to give His Son for me, and that God has accepted His work. He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

I only add this; when I say, you are in Christ, this other truth follows: Christ is in you. Then do not let me see any thing but Christ in you. Being brought to God, Christ is your life; now manifest Christ's life. You are bought with a price, you are not your own; if you want to be your own you do not want to be Christ's. If I am not with God to detect the roots of evil in my heart, they come out, detected by the devil; and we have to look for grace, in dependence on Him. If you say you are a Christian, people should read Christ in you; Christ is my righteousness, I have my Daysman, my soul rests in the consciousness of what Christ has done, and I am waiting with earnest desire for Christ to come and take me to Himself. We have the spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba, Father! May the Lord open your hearts, and turn your eyes to see His love and the perfectness of His work, to have your heart opened, so to speak, to lay your hand upon the Daysman, to know the love God had to you. The Lord give you not to neglect this great salvation, of course it is judgment if you do.

## MATTHEW III.

THE prominent features of this chapter are the mission of John the Baptist, and the entrance upon the scene by the Lord Himself.

Judging from c. ii., 16 (Luke iii. 23), about twenty-eight years are passed over by the Spirit of God in silence, Luke only giving us a glimpse of the Lord during this period. He, too, gives us the birth and early history of John the Baptist. Matthew speaks only of his ministry. About six months older than the Lord—he was to go before Him “in the spirit and power of Elias (Mal. iv., 5-6, Matt. xvii., 12), and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. A prophet he was, and more than a prophet—seeing he not only spoke of the kingdom to come like other prophets, but introduced the King in person. But yet, though greatest of those born of women, he was not in the kingdom itself.

He now enters upon his ministry, and we may observe first the *subject* of it, then the *place* where it takes place, then his own characteristic manner of *dress* and *living*.

Paul, in Acts xix. 4, tells us that his mission was to bring the *people* to repentance, and to believe on a Messiah to come. Here we get a fuller revelation. He announces that Jehovah Himself is coming, and that therefore they were to prepare His way. He further tells them that the kingdom of the heavens is at hand; and lastly, in view of these two facts, their true position was that of self-judgment or repentance.

The application of Isaiah xl. is remarkable here in contrast with Luke iii. 4-6. In each case the Evangelist takes as much of the prophecy as was suitable to his subject. In Luke, inasmuch as the wider glory of the *Son of Man* is brought in, “all flesh” are mentioned; here, inasmuch as *the Messiah* is in view, that part is omitted.

The kingdom of the heavens is what John announces. No longer allegiance to the law is set before the people, but a new state of things well known to those conversant with the prophets, for nearly all had mentioned it. Daniel viii. 13, 14, plainly speaks of it, and Deut. xi. 21, Ps. lxxxix. 29, Daniel iv. 26, and Matt. vi. 10, describe its characters. God’s government will then be openly manifested upon the earth, and His will done on earth as it is in heaven. As we know the period of its establishment has now been indefinitely postponed, and the kingdom of heaven *in mystery*

(the mystery being that the King is absent), is the consequence of the Jews' rejection of their Messiah. God, however, as yet, tests His people by the offer of "the days of heaven upon earth."

The *place* where he ministers is "the wilderness"—this is emphatic—not Jerusalem, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth;" for "the city of the great king" was no longer owned of God, and, therefore, He sends His servant apart from the court and form of godliness to draw out the people, whose hearts God had touched, to take new ground through the baptism of repentance. They no longer range themselves under the headship of Moses,—but under John Baptist they wait for the Messiah.

Quite in character are John's *dress* and *manner of life*. In connection with the camels' hair and leathern girdle (and compare 2 Kings i. 8), we read of the goats' hair covering of the tabernacle, and the sheepskins and goats' skins of those "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. xi). The first points us to the *separate* character of Christ as He walked here on the earth, for the tabernacle is a figure of the person of Christ (Heb. ix. 11). The last tells us that those who followed in His footsteps maintained the same characteristic features—inferior, of course, but similar. His *food*, too, was not of the city, but of the wilderness (Lev. xi. 22).

*The result* of his ministry now comes under our notice. Many of the Jews, discontented, no doubt, with the existing state of things, were baptized of him in Jordan, not pleading righteousness, wisdom, law—but confessing sinfulness, the only "way of righteousness" for the time (c. xxi. 32).

The Pharisees and Sadducees accompany the crowd; but John, detecting their insincerity, exposes their true characters, and warns them not only that true repentance would bring forth fruit, but that hereditary privileges would not avail without it, and moreover that God, who raised up Abraham to be His servant, could also raise up children to him from the very stones. It was not a question now of mere *fruit*-bearing, but God was about to test the *root* itself, and unless there was true repentance, root and branch would alike be cast into the eternal burning.

He then unfolds the purpose of the Lord's mission, in contrast with his own. *His* was to lead the upright in heart to confess their sins—the *Lord's* was to baptize with the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 5) those who thus took their true

place, and to burn up utterly those whose hearts remained untouched by his warnings (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7). The land of Israel (the "floor:" Isa. xxi. 10) should be the scene of both blessing and judgment. There the wheat *has* already been gathered into the garner (Acts ii. 47); there the apostates will *yet*, in the time of the great tribulation, be burned with fire unquenchable.

Jesus Himself now appears upon the scene from the solitudes of Galilee, where we had so lately left Him, and, graciously owning the working of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the people so dear to Him, He desires to identify Himself with them, and though sinless Himself, to take a place in grace side by side with them, in order to accompany them in their trials, and encourage them by His presence (Dan. iii. 25, Is. xliii. 2, 3). John beautifully owns his unfitness for the office, but this does not hinder the devotedness of the Lord. He saw His people's need, and will not be prevented from meeting them in that need; and here the words of Psalm xvi. are beautifully appropriate, altering a little as Hebrew scholars say the present version—"O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to *thee* (Luke xviii. 19), but to the *saints that are in the earth*, and to the excellent, in *them* is all my delight." He thoroughly identifies himself with them when he says, "Thus it becometh *us* to fulfil all righteousness." And now, what is surely most precious to us, we find that at the moment He is taking the lowest place, the Father pays Him the highest honour. ("He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.") Never before do we read of the heavens being opened excepting in vision (Ezekiel i. 1); but now that there was on earth an object worthy of their opening to, they were opened unto Him, and in the form of a dove, the Holy Ghost descends upon Him. He who was *gentleness* itself was "anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power"—without a sacrifice like the High Priest of old (Lev. viii. 12)—in token of the perfection of His person, as we are anointed—like the priest's *sons* after the sacrifice (Lev. viii. 30)—in token of the perfection of His work. And at the same time the Father's voice is heard proclaiming His absolute delight in the Son who had ever displayed His glory. And thus Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, stand confessed at the entrance of Jesus on His ministry. And now, in conclusion,

we may well point to the fourfold opening of the heaven, as Scripture records it. *Here* we find the heavens opened to gaze down on Him on earth. In Acts, they are again opened to Stephen; and to us with Him (Heb. ii. 9); and look up at Jesus, rejected of man, but exalted of God. Pass on now to Rev. xix., and we find them again opened to allow Him to come forth to execute vengeance on His enemies; and in John i. 51, we find them again opened to gaze on Him, as peace having been proclaimed, the angels wait on Him to do His bidding; when, as Son of Man, He has set up His kingdom; when His will is done on earth as in heaven.

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### A FRAGMENT ON ROMANS IV.

THE Apostle had spoken (chapters ii.-iii.) of the two grounds of responsibility—natural conscience, and the law; now he takes up another point—the promises of God; they had to do neither with natural conscience nor with law; the Jews claimed a special place as heirs to the promises of God. But to have Christianity in its place, God must prove all men on the same ground, in ruin and degradation before Him. Verses 9, 10, 11, are to reconcile the faithfulness of God to His promises, with truth: “Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” He shows how the promises given of God to Abraham increased their guilt because they slighted the promises in Christ; all were included under sin. We have all to get this thought clearly, that there is no hope for man, as such, with God, all are under sin; there is an immense principle in it, because it casts us off ourselves on to God for righteousness, for life, for everything.

In Abraham the promises were given without any condition whatever; when the law came, a promise was given on condition of obedience, and the people said—“All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (Ex. xix. 8.), and they made

the golden calf. The moment there was any condition made man broke it, hence the law was the means of ascertaining the state of the heart. The Apostle comes to this point—you cannot make God the God of the Jews only. The law was man's perfect rule, not the rule for a Christian. If you love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself, you would be a perfect *man*, not a *Christian*: you would not want Christ at all, He would not need to die for your sins, you are a perfect man (supposing for the moment that you *could* keep it). The very expression of a claim supposes some disposition not to do it, it implies that the command was needed. Look at the obedience of Christ, there was no checking of His will by a prohibition. The Word of God the spring and the source of our thoughts, not merely the check (we have to be checked to be sure), but *that* is Christian obedience. People think Adam knew good before the fall, and evil after; no, I know more good than Adam ever knew, for I know Christ; his was innocence, quietly enjoying God's favour, doing what he was told, and not doing what he was told not to do. But I get the ten words, and I find at once man's heart must have got into sin—he must have had other gods—must have stolen, committed murder, &c., it is all the expression of the utterly ruined, sinful state of man in the sight of God. In the law pardon was under condition of obedience, they did not know their weakness, like poor Peter, who said to the Lord, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee" (Matt. xxvi. 35). Another element in law is that "it was added because of transgressions" (Gal. iii. 19), *i.e.*, to bring in transgression—I cannot transgress if there is nothing forbidden.

The promises were given before law; the expression of God's intentions in grace which He thoroughly fulfilled without asking man about righteousness. "By the law is the knowledge, not of" sins, but of "*sin*" (Rom. iii. 20). The Jew, being convicted by law, could turn round and say, "I am heir to the promises to Abraham;" he is a person of great importance in this way. What occasioned the call of Abraham? The people had set up to build a tower—they worshipped false gods—"they sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not" (Deut. xxxii. 17). But God must have a people in the earth—when they are *called*

out the promises are given. From Adam there was no root of promise in the world; when man had set up false gods, God calls Abraham out from the very things God had set up—"country, kindred, and father's house"—and says, I will shew you a land, trust yourself to me, and walk with me. When there is total apostasy from the true God, Abraham is called out: that is an immense principle; and we have God's family in the world. Then the promises are given; there was no promise before. When the world set up devils in God's place, He said—I must have a people for Myself. When that people got mixed up with the world, they are spoiled, and cease to be God's people practically. It is the same with the Church, it is called out to be separate. It is spoiled again; has not it got mixed up with the world? John could say—"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John v. 19). Do we know that? Where is the testimony now? Saints have got so mixed up with the world that the world meddles with the things of Christ—there is no line drawn. Abraham then is the first called out to be God's man in the earth. He left his country and his kindred, but not as yet his father's house; he waits till Terah dies. A lingering heart still clings to things in this world. What gave Abraham his special place was faith: that was at the root of the blessing—the calling of God—the promise rested upon faith, *not law*. *Everything* comes from faith except what is animal. Abraham goes on by faith, and this blessed truth comes out that God will have the heart set upon Him. He will have *nothing else* in order to count Abraham righteous. It was to be all of Himself. As Christians we cannot mingle with the world, even in a question of getting food from them, without defilement. Lot was a believer who took the world, Abraham took the promise; faith gives us power to live on God. As soon as Lot had gone God says to Abraham, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all this land which thou seest to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. xiii. 14-15). When a soul surrenders what flesh clings to there is always blessing; he is counted righteous. This was the setting aside of righteousness from man to God, a bringing in of righteousness from God to man. God must say you are a sinner, that is all your history—if you do not own it, I

must prove it. You must get the righteousness of God. You will never be righteous in your thoughts, desires, affections, until then. If a person talks of law, I give him a good dose of it. How much of it have you kept to-day? What day did you keep it? Oh! you have not kept it! Then you are under the curse! We are just where Abraham was without circumcision. With Abraham it was faith, and nothing but faith, because God will not have anything but *His own* in the matter. He has given *Christ*, and He must have it all. Now righteousness *is revealed* what am I to do with it? Believe it! God has sent His Son to establish it, and He will not have anything in the heart that receives it, but the recognition of what He has put His seal upon.

The character of Abraham's faith ought to be ours in practice—God said it—He is able to perform. We believe that He has performed, that He has “raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.”

## THE LORD'S HOST.

### A FEW THOUGHTS ON CHRISTIAN POSITION, CONFLICT, AND HOPE.

#### CHAPTER XI.

#### *Gilgal: “The Old Corn of the Land.”*

“AND they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day” (Jos. v. 11). Here another characteristic of Gilgal is seen. A circumcised people are feeding upon this heavenly food. This points to a glorified Christ, as the manna does to a humbled, lowly one. In the desert the heart is cheered and sustained by feeding on Him as the lowly Jesus; the “bread of God,” who came down from heaven to give life to the world. We have received life out of His death. He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. We lay in death and ruin, and He entered the scene in holy love. He died and ended our whole moral being as sinners in the sight of God. “He that eateth me,” He says, “shall live by me.” But in feeding upon Him, we feed on One who has ended our history as children of Adam—so that we do not live by Adam at all, but by Christ, who has borne the judgment which stood registered against us.

As poor sinners we came first and ate His flesh and drank His blood. That is, we appropriated by faith that death as meeting our state and accomplishing the redemption by which we have left for ever our whole condition, and thus, out of His death we have received life. Then we live because of, and on account of Him. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me (the One who had died and risen), even he shall live by me" (John vi. 57). Is there diligence of heart, beloved, in feeding upon this humbled, dead and risen Son of God? It is the characteristic of eternal life in us, which we possess in Him, that it lives by Him as its object. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me (not merely died for me, or put away my sins, but, "who loved me"), and gave himself for me"—yes, gave Himself for me, and loved me when I was a sinner and nothing else. Blessed Son of God—Son of the Father, who has told out His Father's love, and bade me read it in Himself; to whom I cling and in whom I trust, to whom I can unburthen my poor wretched heart when it has turned aside and fed upon things for which He had to suffer and die. Pardon and cleanse the wandering hearts of those whom Thou lovest, Blessed Lord; draw them to Thyself, and unfold Thyself to our souls, and occupy our hearts with Thine own sufficiency!

In the desert we learn the need of feeding upon this Humbled One. Reproach is bitter, but He bore it Himself—"The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." And when we are privileged to bear the reproach, what sweetens it, but that it is "the reproach of Christ?" How faultily too are we able to interpret these trials and sufferings for His name, in their true value. What may seem deserved by us, and what thus may lead us to judge our selves, may, after all, when weighed and appraised according to the balances of the sanctuary, be "the reproach of Christ.

How could Moses tell when he forsook the court of Pharaoh, and fled when he had slain the Egyptian, that God would characterise his act as He does in Hebrews xi. 26? Oh, what marvels of divine grace, and what weighings of actions that none can read but God Himself, will be manifested in that day when "every man shall have praise of God!" Actions which we blushed to recal; poor, faltering blunders, fears and turnings of our eyes to the right hand and to the left; but God, who has treasured them as the productions of

His grace in us, will then read all that His grace wrought in us, in the daylight of heaven, and they will receive a name that will make us only wonder and adore. Many a fine action too, which has won the applause of men, will then be found to have had its meed in that applause; only worthy too, it may be, of a place in the forgotten past, and unworthy of a name in the then recounted annals of the wilderness way!

But it is the manna which feeds the soul in that journey, and it is appreciable only by those who tread in the path where such food is found. It is not found amongst the great things, or the great ones of this earth. His was a lowly, unknown track, but one which left a path of heavenly light behind it in the eyes of God!

When consciously in wilderness circumstances, we need another food. We need that which grows and ripens and fructifies in the land of glory. So we read that they ate the old corn of the land, on the selfsame day on which they kept the passover on the plains of Jericho. A heavenly Christ now unfolds Himself, and feeds our souls, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16). How bold does Paul grow in his glowing words in this Scripture. His life seemed to be made up of two alternatives; "Beside himself," when his heart entered upon those things that eye of man had not seen, but which are revealed unto us by the Spirit; but "sober" when he thought on others (v. 13). The love of Christ constrained his heart—impelled him onward in its mighty swellings, because of man's condition—"dead"—proved by His "dying for all," to beseech men. But that once-dead One, now lived; He had died, and had risen, and entered on that scene of glory. In Him God would make all things new. That vista of the new creation opens before his heart—he sees the One whom some may have known as the Messiah walking here in lowly love. He would know no *man* after the flesh; but his heart glows, and grows bolder as he proceeds, "Yea, though we have known *Christ* after the flesh," as He was on earth, "yet now henceforth know we him," he says, "no more." He had entered the glory as a Man. As Man He occupied the throne of God—object of the adoration of the Hosts in glory; *there* he knew Him now—as the "old corn" of that land. If he needed Him (as he ever did) in the wilderness way, it was as One whom now we understand in measure,

whom He was as He traversed the world—"the bread of God" which came down from heaven—who died, and rose, and went on high.

We never feed at the *same moment* on Christ, in these two conditions. As we are in the double place of being on high, and traversing this world's deserts, so we need Him to feed and sustain our souls in both conditions. In one we need to see and know Him in His downward path from the glory to the cross, as the Humbled One—the true manna—whose "mind" is to be in us, enabling us to bring God down in the circumstances, so as to act divinely in them every moment. This we learn in Phil. ii. In the other the eye, once blinded by His glory, grows stronger by His Spirit as it gazes on Him who had displaced the whole moral being of His servant, and his body thus filled with light from that glory, seeks only to "know him," and to "win Christ" as it runs onward to the goal of complete assimilation to the One on whom it feeds in heavenly glory on high. This is the "old corn" which fed Paul in Phil. iii.

Oh, what preparations of heart for the people of God! What lessons for those who would fight "not in uncertainty" for the possessions which they seek to realize. But they must learn too that only as "unleavened cakes" can this heavenly Christ be used and enjoyed. How could the joys of earth—of human relationships, be allowable in such food? Impossible. The fruit of the land must be eaten by those who are circumcised in the unleavened perfection of that nature which is capable of feeding on such food. What can those who are feeding upon the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," know of this old corn of the land? They are running after the vanities of this life, the follies of this world. They need to go to Gilgal! Egypt's chains are still there. Egypt's "reproach" still clings to them. And though they may be truly trusting in Him whom they profess to love; though they may be dead and risen with Christ, they need to visit Gilgal that they may be circumcised, ere they can either need or appreciate this heavenly food.

Let us test our hearts, beloved. Are they feeding with diligence on a heavenly Christ, or upon those things which shut Him out? Is Christ precious to us as hidden treasure? Is the "beauty of the Lord" sufficient to fill our hearts, so that our soul are filled with marrow and fatness, and we are able, in a dry and thirsty land, to praise Him with joyful lips?

## JONATHAN AND DAVID.

## I SAMUEL XVIII. 1-4.

THE Old Testament does not give us the history of the man, but the faithfulness of the servant, so far as it was typical of Christ who was to come. Thus the faithful servant represented in his faithfulness the Christ who *was to come*—the faithful servant now represents Christ who *has come*. There are two things in the Bible, man's ruin and God's remedy for that ruin. A good physician must know both in order to meet your case properly: he must know what is the matter with you, and what will cure you. And this is what baffles the infidel, for here I find what is the matter with me, viz., that I am a lost and ruined sinner, and I also find God's remedy for my real state. Another book will tell you of your neighbours, a clever satire or lampoon on the human race; but here you find yourself—God speaking to your conscience; for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv). This book tells me I am lost and brings salvation to me, and the knowledge of forgiveness and peace with God, and the hope of glory; and all through Jesus Christ, and that is what suits me. God tells me my sinful state and what meets it.

In I Samuel xvii. we find the people were in a state of fear because of the giant, and that is the state of man. As it is written, Heb. ii. 14, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But perhaps you say, "I was never afraid of death." Well, I pity you, for if you have never been afraid of it you have never got relief yet from the fear of it. There are but two states proper to man, the fear of God because of sin, and release from that fear through the work of Christ: for "perfect love casteth out fear." Death is the wages of sin, and is a terrible thing. There is not one but would quail before it. It might rob you in a moment of the dearest thing you have on earth, and if it overtakes you in your sin it would launch you into eternal judgment. It is the only power on earth that has not a head. Death is an anomaly in God's creation; it is the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. It is justly styled the "king of

terrors." And this is the state people are in—the fear of death.

. Now David was sent by his father to enquire how his brethren fared (chap. xvi. 17), and just so Christ was sent of God; and this is the fundamental truth of the gospel—the truth that rests your heart—that salvation springs from the heart of God and not from your own. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

David came and found the terror of the people. His elder brothers rebuked him; and so it was with Christ (John i. 11, ii. 18), but He passed on without minding the rebuke, for He had something else before His mind. And that is the sign of being a true servant of God, to go on with his work and never mind what man says to you. "The poor heareth not rebuke" (Prov. xiii. 8), and if you are really poor in your own eye you will not mind; so Christ passed on to death to glorify God and work deliverance for His people. But besides this there is another thing, viz., the work that goes on in the soul of the believer before he is brought into the knowledge and enjoyment of this deliverance wrought for him by Christ. And there are different stages of this work in the soul. Every one has to go through this same experience, though it may be in different ways: the experiences of all are alike in kind though different in degree.

First, there is what you might call the *anxious* state. Jonathan sees David going to encounter the Philistine. Now, this is a real state, and the soul must go through it for itself—they passed through the Red Sea for themselves, i.e., Christ's death for me (not through the Jordan, i.e., my own death, when they got to that the waters of Jordan were dried up), but you do get the sense that by Christ's death you are clear of judgment. In Ex. xii. the blood being outside to meet the eye of God; they were themselves inside eating the roasted lamb, i.e., they were to have the sense of God's own Son bearing the judgment of God. They were not to eat of it sodden, i.e., they were not to speak lightly, nor in terms of natural intimacy of Christ, without knowing the greatness of the person and work that has met for us the judgment of God. This is one of the great sins of the day.

Now, safety from judgment is got in the place of judgment, but the great thing is to get out of it; and this brings me to the—

Second state, the *hopeful* state. Jonathan sees Goliath down, and he is hopeful, but not *happy* yet. He is not sure if it is a complete success. Goliath may rise again. How many there are who, if you ask them Are you saved? will answer, "I hope so." They are in this state *hopeful*, but not *happy*.

Third. Then there is the *assured* state, for the giant's head is off, "he is destroyed" (Heb. ii. 13). The debt is paid, and the receipt made out in my name; and the resurrection is this, the living David holds in his hand the head of the dead giant. Now, resurrection was not for Christ but for me. He was raised for our justification, and as a risen man He appears in the midst of His disciples (John xx.) and says, "Peace be unto you." Now, peace is not merely a victory, nor a great one, but it is as much as to say I have silenced the enemy—there is no longer a disturbing element, and He comes to conduct us into the very scene and place in which He is Himself. And this you never can lose. The sense of it may be darkened for a time through carelessness, but the moment you come back to Christ you will find it still the same. Christ has risen out of the scene of death, like the frigate bird that rises above the clouds in a storm into the region of calm, and He conducts me above my ruin and darkness into the region of His own peace.

But not only is the resurrection the receipt on my side, it is on God's side the proof of righteousness. God has been glorified, and not merely satisfied about my sin, and in proof thereof He has glorified the One who put away my sin—"He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him, and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him (John xiii. 31). This is divine satisfaction in a wonderful way, and not merely that I have got the receipt. Therefore, the gospel is a ministration of righteousness, and you never can have a cloud on your heart before God, because you have an eternal witness before Him shining in everlasting brilliancy, inviting your heart to behold in the glory of God the proof that God has been glorified by the Man who has undertaken your case from Him. As I was bound up in the flesh with the first man Adam, so I am now by the Spirit with Christ in the glory of God: and therefore we have the—

Fourth state, viz., *occupation with Christ* now, who has

wrought the deliverance, and not with the deliverance itself—the Deliverer and not the deliverance. If you are not, it is because you have not got complete deliverance. You may be genuine, but you have not yet deliverance, and your own genuineness will never give it to you, but only Christ; and He gives it that you may be occupied with Him, for when He clears the ground He then occupies it. And so Jonathan has now nothing but David. His soul is knit to the soul of David. Is that your case? And he confesses him fully. Now, confession is with the mouth—with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. And confession is two-fold, public and private; and it must be continuous. It is not to save the soul, it is to keep it safe. And if Jonathan had only continued his confession he would not have fallen afterwards fighting the Philistines, the very people from whom David delivered him. And Jonathan and David made a covenant together—for he loved him as his own soul—and he stripped even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle; they were the insignia of his royal hopes as son of King Saul and heir apparent to the kingdom; but he gives all to David. And so the soul that knows Jesus as the Great Deliverer strips itself of everything to honour Christ. But his confession, so beautifully made in this chapter, was not continued, and he chose to remain in public association with his father's house, than identify himself with the fortunes of David when he was a wanderer and an exile. "If any man will come after me," says Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me;" and whosoever will not take up his cross cannot be my disciple. You must continue your confession, and add to your faith virtue, &c. (2 Pet. i.), and be diligent to make your calling and election sure—not, of course, before God, who knows everything, but to your own heart and before others.

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## THE LORD'S TWOFOLD COMFORT TO HIS DISCIPLES.

JOHN xiv.

THE thought on my heart connected with the chapter we heard read was the two means of comfort, so to speak, which the blessed Lord left with His disciples when He was about to leave them. He cannot always remain with them; such

was not in accordance with the work He had undertaken. He must leave them ; but He says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Now this thought of a coming Lord was less familiar to the disciples than to us. They, as Jews, looked for the establishment of Messiah's kingdom on the earth. We, as Christians—I speak in contrast to Jews—are taught to expect to see the Lord in heaven, and some of us, by grace, look for Him from heaven. But here He would instruct them to know Him by faith, not by sight. The first thing, then, which He presents to them to comfort them is Himself. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," and the second, as we shall see, is the Holy Ghost. When we know Christ we can go no further. No truth beyond Himself, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily" (Col. iii. 9). He is now about to go back to the Father, therefore He says, "And whither I go ye know." His whole work down here, whilst among them, was to reveal the Father. He had finished this work, He had revealed Him ; "their eyes were holden that they should not know him," as we know, but that is another thing, He had done His part, and could say, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," for they had come to Him and He was the way. In coming to Christ we know all things, through a glass darkly, no doubt, but nothing more can be known; we get at the source of all blessing—the Father and the Son, the fulness of blessing. Here we are brought in spirit into the knowledge of all, and the disciples had the same knowledge, though as we know they could not see.

The second comfort He gives them, to keep them during His absence, is the Comforter, and He tells them two distinct privileges which they shall have consequent upon His coming, which they could not have had before: He shall "abide with you for ever," and "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Now Christ, as they knew Him, could not abide with them ; it was expedient for them that He should leave them, but the Spirit was to abide with them, and to dwell in them, whereby they were to learn and know that not only was He in the Father, and the Father in Him, but that they were in Christ, and Christ in them. The highest truth we can get we may learn it more fully, but never can get a higher truth. "I will not leave you comfortless, I

will come to you." This is a present truth, He is come by His spirit, He is in us, comforting us by His presence.

The Lord having put us into this place we are responsible. He says: "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him." Loving Him is not our place, but the effect of being in our place; and thence follows constant present blessing. All through John, you may have remarked, he puts our loving Him first; we know our love did not precede his, but this is the order of John's gospel, because addressed to those who were His; not to the world but to His own. If we walk in His commandments we shall have present and constant sense of His presence—"we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The realization and enjoyment of it. How the Lord counts upon our affections! First, look at that little word, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I." As though He said, real love is ever forgetful of self, and if ye loved Me, instead of sorrowing thus at your own lonely prospects, ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father. He expects our affections. How entirely was He man, more than man of course, but He was man, expecting the affections, seeking them; the affections of His people. Blessed be His name, He humbled Himself that He might win them, and brought us out of our condition into His own, and now His peace is ours. His peace, how perfect!

## LETTERS OF INTEREST.

### I.

. . . . Have you ever thought of a Sunday school in —? It must be the faith of those who are engaged in it. I can suggest, but cannot myself be present, and of course each one must exercise the talent given in dependence on the Lord.

I was thankful the saints got help through the lecture, at all events, on Rev. i. 3. They are the nearest thing to Christ. Then the world . . . . The gathering at S—, I found much reduced. . . . but some dear souls amongst them. It is a fashionable watering place of England, so you may imagine the poor saints are almost crushed. Some through occupation with the Lord had risen above the stream of worldliness; others, alas! had more or less let the eye turn downward, and had suffered. I was very happy in

labouring amongst them, and through your prayers was, I believe, owned of God to some amongst them.

What I find among saints is the absence of *private* reading of the Word, and I suspect private prayer. Oh that they would remember the words of the apostle (Acts xx.), "And now I commend you to *God* and the *word* of his grace," and again, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the *word* of God." "Praying always."

## II.

I was grieved on getting certain tidings of ——'s mind, and had a desire to step over at once to be with you in the trouble which that must have occasioned you. But the sea, commonly offensive to me, and the weather, and the time of the year, and other things, were stronger with me, whether rightly or wrongly I will not say, the Lord knows.

Bnt still I was in my little measure troubled with your trouble; indeed it was *ours* as well as *yours*.

——'s mind, I found, was not a steady settled one, she was but partially on the ground of "brethren." When the Evangelical Alliance held their meetings here she attended them with earnestness and pleasure. But she never communicated to any of us her thoughts about the person of the Lord, and I cannot but blame her for it, because she must have known that this would have grieved us. Indeed as another said she ought to have had more respect to the conscience, which she knew was in —— meeting, in this matter. I had occasion to consider the passage (Rom. viii. 3) in writing to another some time since. But even long before that, for years and years I have been fully assured that such scripture does not contemplate the *incarnation* but the *mission* of the Son. All that has been concluded from it, as the doctrine of the *Person* of the Lord, is founded on a great misapprehension of the mind of the Spirit in the passage itself. "God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This is not a writing on the *Person* of the Christ, but on the *mission* or work of the Son. It teaches us that the Son offered up for sin on the accursed tree, or on the cross, represented and atoned for *sin in the flesh*, so that not only are actual transgressions cleansed away by the sacrifice at Calvary, but *sin in the flesh* condemned as well, as an incurably evil thing, has been answered for by that same sacrifice. I speak of the elect.

But ——'s thoughts, if I understand them, go to the length of the Irvingites, I suppose, not merely what we have been made so painfully to listen to as the voice of Bethesda, in B——, but even the more startling language that has gone forth from P——, would not at all out-measure the language of her thoughts.

Well, dear ——, I can only say I can have no fellowship with it. I love ——, her spirit is tender and gracious, but thoughts that are untrue to the glory of the Person of the Son of God must be rebuked by those who have the stewardship of that glory committed to them. Let us pray that she may review her thoughts and exercise revenge on them. It was a "holy thing," that was born of the virgin; it was Immanuel, it was *God* in flesh, that journeyed from Bethlehem to Calvary—two natures in one person. The Lord be with you.

### III.

Just a line; we knew you would be sorrowing, but it is *God* who would have us sorrow.

There is always a spring of rest, and even of joy, deeper than the sorrow when God is in it. He would not have us without affections. He gave us them. But only as Christ is before us are they pure and true.

Dearest —— is just dying, or seemingly so. She has had much suffering for twenty hours now; is quite twisted, and often convulsed. As sweet as ever, and soon will be more so. God is with us; my wife is wonderfully upheld; her "will is taken out of her affections without destroying them," as beloved J. N. D. says in a letter just received from him from —— on hearing of our dear ——'s illness.

### M A T T H E W I V.

From the commencement of this chapter we may learn this simple principle, that God will not lead His own into circumstances of trial without first amply preparing them for those circumstances. He had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, and He now leads Him by the Spirit into the wilderness that His manhood should be thoroughly put to the test. The prince of this world is the instrument chosen of God to do this, as in Job's case he had been selected to break the links that bound the carnal man to the earth. God will be glorified, and if man in the

flesh had failed to glorify Him He will still be glorified in His Son. The first Adam had failed to resist the test applied to him by Satan ; it remains now that Jesus should do this, even though everything that could entice the natural man was laid before Him in the most attractive forms.

The wilderness, the pinnacle of the temple, and the exceeding high mountain, are the three scenes of the temptation. And the character of the trial is suited to the locality. The wilderness was necessarily destitute of food. The pinnacle would afford the most suitable, because the most lofty spot, whence to display so notable a miracle as the ninety-first Psalm encouraged Messiah to trust God for. And the mountain top was the place whence naturally all the kingdoms of the world would appear before the eye in their most attractive forms.

The temptations man is subject to are divided by the apostle John into three classes (chap. ii. 16.) "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." These comprise "all that is in the world." In these three ways Eve was evidently tempted, in the same three the Lord Jesus, less clearly perhaps, but not the less certainly, for He "was in all points tempted, like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). It was "when the woman saw that the tree was good for *food*, and that it was pleasant to the *eyes*, and a tree to be desired to make one *wise*," that she gave way. Thus the lust of the flesh, &c., had their three-fold development in her. In Christ we find one who would not satisfy His natural need of *food* at the expense of obedience, who would not allow His *eye* to rest on the world so as to covet it, and who would not take Messiah's place lest the *pride of life* should be manifested in Him.

Not only had Adam failed to glorify God in resisting Satan, but Israel also had given way through disobedience to the law. Here, therefore, we find Christ taking the place, not only of a perfect Man, but of a perfect Israelite, and resisting Satan by means of perfect subjection to the law of Moses. Had he conquered Him as *God* there were neither victory nor contest, for one word from the Creator were sufficient to send the creature to perdition, but Christ, though "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. ix. 5) was perfect Man, "made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal iv. 4) besides ; and in this character, we find Him here displayed. And surely this may awaken a deeper feeling of interest in

us, as we "consider Him," who is now able, perfectly to sympathise with us in our trials, seeing that He endured precisely the same, leaving us an example as to how we should behave under similar circumstances.

How different was His place and that of Adam. A garden of delights, surrounded by animals that were under his dominion, marked the scene of Adam's testing. Christ was in the wilderness surrounded by the "wild beasts" (Mark i. 13). Forty long days and nights the trial lasted (Luke iv. 2). Perhaps inasmuch as He took the place of Israel in memory of the "forty years" that Israel had tempted God in the desert (Deut. viii. 2, 4). *Elijah* had gone in the strength of the meat that God provided forty days and forty nights to Horeb—the mount of God. *Moses*, too, had gone into the same mount for the same time (Exodus xxxiv. 28); 1 Kings xix. 8). But in *Elijah's* case there was no opposing enemy, and in *Moses'* case he went to be with God. *Moses* thus was separated from his natural condition to be with God. Christ was separated from His to be with the enemy. Everything was against Him, and yet by the word of Jehovah's lips He kept Himself from the paths of the destroyer (Ps. xvii. 4). He had, indeed, put on the whole armour of God, and defended Himself with the sword of the Spirit, which is His word.

Satan first tests Him as Man: "If thou be the Son of God command," &c. One word would have been sufficient, but the perfect man, and obedient Jew, would not transgress the law of His God, who said that "*man* should not live by bread alone."

Again, as *Messiah*, the protecting care of God had been promised to Him, and surely when the enemy can quote Scripture he is, indeed, "transformed into an angel of light" (2 Cor. xi. 14). But, again, the word proves an infallible resource against him, and Jesus answers him that such a course as this would be but tempting the Lord. And now the final test is applied as to whether He would take the place of the *Son of Man* in glory (Ps. viii. 6) without passing through the sufferings that would entitle Him to it. But, again, the word supplies a ready answer, and God, not Satan, is alone to be worshipped. In Rev. xiii. 2 we read how Satan afterwards finds one (the future head of the Latin empire) who only too willingly accepts from him the domain that Christ had so successfully refused,

The temptation was now over for a season (chap. iv), and Satan receives his sentence of dismissal from the stronger man, who having now bound the strong man (chap. xii. 29) is about to spoil his goods.

Jesus now takes his place as "the light from Nephtalim," identifying Himself with the poor of the flock. He then, His forerunner having been cast into prison, preaches repentance, as the necessary precursor of the kingdom of heaven.

He calls for their work, Simon, Andrew, James, and John—their *conversion* had taken place before (John i. 40-42)—and promising them a service of a higher character, becomes Himself the all-absorbing object of their hearts, so that ships and fathers are alike left for His superior claims.

He now proceeds with His ministry, making use of the synagogues, or wherever there was an open door, and displaying "the powers of the world to come," the millennial age. Thus, as Man, He successfully opposes Satan; as God He heals diseases (Exodus xv. 26; Isaiah, xxxiii. 24; Ps. ciii. 3.). Thus from verses 23-25 we get the powers of the kingdom; from chap. v. vii. its character.

### MATTHEW XVI. 21—28.

THE Lord addresses Himself to His journey to Jerusalem, in the full recognition of this—that He has there to meet the *enmity of man*: here He does not look towards that city with the thought of His being made there *the offering for sin* under the hand of God, but rather, of His being there *the victim of man's hatred*.

His death, of course, had each of these characters in it. It was the death of the Lamb of God for the putting away of sin—it was the death of the righteous Witness against the world, whom the world, in full enmity, slew and crucified. It was, at one and the same moment, the death of the *Atoning Lamb* and the death of the *Martyr*, but it is in the second of these characters, the Lord anticipates it here.

His road to Jerusalem was such, that all His saints can be in that same road with Him, and He calls on them to follow Him along it. And this evinces His mind on this occasion, for we could never follow Him as the Lamb, or the Atoning Victim, but we may, and should follow Him as the

Martyr or righteous suffering Witness against the world. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (v. 24.)

This makes the *character* of this path of Christ very simple and distinct. But, there is comfort along that road, if we have but faith to receive it. It is a weary and a rough path, such as nature does not like. We do not like to be the companions of an insulted, despised, rejected, suffering Master. A journey on such a road as that is rough enough, and strength and heart naturally fail. But again I say, there is comfort provided for it, if we have but faith to receive it and drink it in. "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (v. 28). This is the comfort. The saints are not set on this road to Jerusalem, this path across a world that is at enmity with them, and is preparing *death* for them (as men at Jerusalem were then preparing it for Jesus), till they are given to know what *the end* of that journey is to be—till they be introduced to the glory that lies on the other side of the sorrow and the martyrdom—till they see the Mount of Transfiguration that is higher as well as more distant, than Mount Calvary.

This is the comfort, and this the Lord gives His saints when He calls them to follow Him on the road to Jerusalem, in v. 28. And in this character of it, let me observe, that that verse (v. 28) is an epitome of that magnificent chapter, Acts vii. For one of the purposes of the Spirit in Acts vii. is to tell us this:—that from the beginning, and all along the line of Scripture, the Lord has never called His elect into a place of sorrow without telling them, or giving them some notice, of the glory and joy that were to end the sorrow.—Thus—

*Abraham* was called from all that nature could value, but it was the God of *glory* that had appeared to him, and spoke to him with words of *promise*.

*Joseph* was separated, and in principle was a martyr—but he had had *dreams* which already told him of *ultimate exaltation*.

*Moses* was reviled, refused, exiled; both brethren and strangers, the seed of Abraham and uncircumcised Egyptians, mistaking him, and persecuting him—but he already had had that *beauty* upon him which faith discerned to be of God *the token of divine favour*.

Stephen was hated like his Master; interfered against and killed—but his face had already *shone like that of an angel*, he was marked as a child of resurrection ere he was hurried, as a martyr, to death.

And so in Matt. xvi. 28—Some were to taste of death; (Peter himself was to be bound and led whether he would not, John xxi. 18, 19), and suffer as a martyr, but they were to be taken beforehand to the place of the glory, and shown the heavenly blessedness in which all their sorrow was to end: the value of which is such, as the Lord here speaks, that “the whole world” though gained would be nothing in comparison with the loss of it—if the soul at the end, came short of “the glory of the Son of Man,” all beside, though acquired, would leave the soul a loser.

## THE SYMPATHIES OF OUR HIGH PRIEST.

### HEBREWS viii.

It is remarkable how much we may be with God in the circumstances in which we are placed, and having God in them, and yet not be practically in the heavenly calling. To be consciously and practically in it is a totally different state. The soul may be thinking of God's presence amid the woes and troubles here, and looking at it as a *rest* out of it. Or it may in heart think of the place merely that Christ has sat down there, and ministers grace to it down here. Christ is the centre source of each. He is the Word; who has come *down here* and dealt with our souls here—then He adds, “and for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” He takes us *up there*. He has gone apart as Man, away from the rest of men. He takes up the double character of service towards us. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” perfect grace brought Him to the sinner, but now He is carrying our hearts as He will our bodies into glory. We get the *mixture* of feeling in our poor hearts. Divine light and love brought into the scene, yet bringing our hearts out of it. Whenever I get the other world I must get the cross, because the things of my heart and flesh—all selfishness—are in no wise connected with heaven; all is love there—lust, nor pride, nor worldliness never can be connected with heaven. “Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood” ye cannot know the bread which came down from heaven.

If you do not know a dying Saviour gone out of the world you do not get practical sanctification of heart or true association with Him as a present thing. A person may have a very true and blessed apprehension of His person and yet not have the flesh subdued to take up the position and consequences which follow from it down here. In Peter it was not a revelation of flesh and blood but from the Father, yet Peter's mind was not prepared for the necessary consequences. He says—Have mercy on yourself, do not let that happen to you. A soul may be taught of God and yet find when it comes to walk, that as to the state of his heart he has not realized it. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," not only to take up our hearts by a heavenly work, but so to bring down a heavenly word that it may judge them. Christ takes both in, and His present position is just the link of it. He could not be a Priest if He were not up there, because He must have entered into all that I have to pass through down here, in order to sustain me in it and yet He must be *free* to be occupied with the things up there. We *do want both*. This is a question of a soul with God, not of a child with the Father. A naughty child may go and tell his father, but in the question of competency to enter into the holiest, it is a question of *going* to God, a question of His holiness and of my perfect title to be close to the throne of God where no evil could appear. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest," this priesthood was in contrast with Christ, men encompassed with infirmities and weakness able to sympathize in the things as in them *at the time*. "Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." This would not do for us, and for this reason that He must be down here. The priesthood would have ended where it was exercised—*it ends now where it is exercised*, and not only for a year but for ever it goes till there is no need for it. But our High Priest went through all that fitted Him to help us before He went into the *place*, not only to sympathize with us, but to bring down heavenly things to us and to take our hearts through the things up to where it is all completely settled, and now I want my heart to be in the place where it *is* settled—kept by the power of God through *faith*. That is the way He keeps. Is your faith never dim or feeble? Do your eyes look straight forward? Do they never look askance? Satan tempted Christ by

the glories of this world—is there not a nature in you which sees something fair in this world? Satan tempted Him by everything that could be attractive to a man: He was tested in every possible way but was perfect in obedience. He became “the Author and Finisher of faith.” He was perfect in going through the things, we have to learn in the things to go through the path of faith with *everything* against us, there is not a thing in the world that is not either *an occasion of obedience or of temptation*—either the occasion of making us quail from the straight path, or of blessed obedience in it. But Christ is constantly and unceasingly occupied for me in all the trials and temptations of the path. He has suffered being tempted—in Him it was the occasion of the flowing out of the odour of His good ointments, but He was tested. He says to Peter, “I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.” Peter loved the Lord but he did not know himself, he had to be put through a process to let in the knowledge of himself, but before ever he had committed sin Christ prayed for him—so here we get that “He ever liveth to make intercession:” it is the word used for besetting a person to get what you want. Christ is one in the presence of God obtaining for us whatever we need, not that we go to ask Him to intercede but He is there, ever our servant (see John xiii). We might have thought that would cease when He had gone to glory. He came down in the form of a servant and He is never going to give it up. Before God we are perfectly clean, accepted in Him, but we do pick up dirt by the way, and it is His service to wash our feet. He does not say that He is mighty and able to help, but that He suffered, perfect to suffer being tempted. *We* do not suffer when our hearts acquiesce. On the other side, such a high priest *became* us, became God; the kind of high priest that takes us right into the sanctuary. I want a priest who can feel for me here, and I want a priest who can take me in there, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. and made higher than the heavens.” Why? Because in our place, our calling, in Him we are “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens,” *we* go in to worship in the holiest—going higher than the heavens—going to God Himself. I have got this place as called out of the world, I have got it through this blessed Man who has come down, who in putting forth His own sheep, went before them all the way and I am in this blessed

dependence all along the road. I come boldly to the throne of grace, I know that Christ is there . . . how He has filled up the whole measure from weakness, trial, exercise of heart down here right up to the throne where He is sitting on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, giving me competency for intercourse with God which *He could not do unless He was close to God*, this is what Christ sustains. Having given me a place in the heavenlies He puts me in a path where there is constant supply. My heart wants to be there in my place above the heavens. I have got Christ there as the One who carries my heart up with Him, for nothing separates me from Him. Do you go and try it; stay half an hour in the positive sense of God's presence, you have not power to sustain yourself there, you want energy of faith. Nothing so tests the state of your soul as *how long* you can keep up intercourse with God. Suppose your heart has tasted that enjoyment, how long can you keep it? Do not you want One there to sustain you in it? "He ever liveth to make intercession"—He lives for that. A double case of meeting you down here and taking you up above the heavens to be with God in tender, gracious, thoughtful, condescending love. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but out of them now, that is the very character of Christ's priesthood. *When I speak of my old man I do not want sympathy—I want the hatchet of God's Word* "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," when I find the evil of my flesh I want to have it thoroughly judged. I can look to Him *to be with me against it*. The heart learns to trust the ever living love of Christ in the presence of God for us, the very infirmities in us become occasions of help from God, occasions of seeing how God's heart can be constantly occupied with me. The High Priest is gone in now—this is our heavenly calling—and while *in* the Holy Ghost comes *out* to us. *Our* association with Christ is while He is in, therefore we have assurance, full assurance of faith. The Lord give us to see how such a High Priest *became us*, and to know the effect of that ministry of His to keep our hearts steady, whether carried up in Spirit with Him, or sustained down here by Him.

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