

# WORDS OF TRUTH

FOR THE

SAINTS OF GOD.

---

THIRD SERIES.

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“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” Acts xviii. 11.

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sorrow. Paul and Onesimus as to inward feelings were on a level, but in the Church they had different places and gifts : so also as men.

These are great things respecting the glory of Jesus, and our union with Him, but it is God's word, and not man's. The same Word which tells us of Adam and his sin, tells us of this. We did not see Adam sin, yet we believe that he sinned, and we feel the consequences of his sin. Why should we not, as fully, receive the testimony of God, when He speaks of our union with His Son, and of the glory into which we shall be brought, as heirs together with Him ?

O Jesus Christ, most holy !  
 Head of the Church, thy bride,  
 Each day in us more fully  
 Thy name be magnified.

O may in each believer  
 Thy love its pow'r display,  
 And none among us ever  
 From thee, our Shepherd, stray.

## JESUS, "CAPTAIN OF SALVATION."

HEB. ii.

IN the first chapter, the glory of the person of the Son of God is made the great subject of the revelation, as showing our glory and blessing in connection with Him. In consequence of this, angels are "sent forth to *minister* for them who shall be heirs of salvation." (*ch.* i. 14.) So that, even now, before we are revealed in the power of this "salvation", we have angels *ministering* to us.

Angels are appointed as one of the means of security to the child of faith. (Ps. xxxiv. 7; Gen. xxxii. 1, 2; 2 Kings vi. 17.) In the midst of evil spirits, by whom we are surrounded, and watched for evil, we are watched over by angels from God. If God, through the Holy Ghost, ministers to the soul, nourishing it, supplying oil to the lamp; so do the angels minis-

ter unto us in outward things. They know what a "salvation" is ours; they understand its nature, though they may not know as yet all the greatness of it, and they are glad to *minister* unto us, because it is according to the mind of God. This is the great regulating principle even to angels, (Ps. ciii. 20; Matt. vi. 10.) Since it is the mind of God that they should come down here, amidst *circumstances of sorrow, and trial, and evil*—so contrary to their nature—to minister to us, they are willing to do it. Being subject to God, they count it blessed for everlasting, to be subject to, and lower than the "heirs of salvation." *Now*, they minister to us, *hereafter*, they will be subject to us. (1 Cor. vi. 3.) Yet they rejoice in this; they willingly minister to the saints, because they are subject to the mind of God. This alone can settle every thing happily. It is the secret of happiness, as well as of ho-

liness and blessing, to be willingly subject to the appointment of God. (Matt. xi. 25, 26.)

Seeing, therefore, that it is "so great salvation," we are exhorted to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, that they slip not away from the apprehension of our souls ; that we become not (as the figure is here) like "leaky vessels." (*v.* 1). This has been the character of the professing Church. There are many references in the Epistle, to the merely professing part of the Church, who resemble those Israelites who fell in the wilderness. (*ch.* iii. 16 ; iv. 2.) But the saints also are warned ; because similar dangers to those which ruined them, beset us.

Speaking as to Christianity generally, the knowledge and apprehension of much that there is in "salvation," as it is set forth in these chapters, has been altogether let slip and lost.

Even as to real believers, their thoughts little reach up to what they have been *saved into*; almost all they think about, is, what we have been *delivered from*. Now by far the most important part of "salvation" is that *into which* we are brought. They do not see what union with Christ is—what the nature of the life we have in Him—or, that He has made us partakers of the glory into which He is risen. These things have slipped from their minds. They are not brought into the power of the *new* creation; they feel as if they still belonged to the old; they do not see that they are delivered into a place where *nature*—mere nature, is to be known no longer, where things are not thought of according to nature, but according to God. They do not breathe the atmosphere of that place. The new principles of the kingdom are not in their hearts; their principles of thought and of action are from

below—of the world, and not from above. (Matt. v. vi. vii.) And great is the consequent loss. For although we are made partakers of the life of Christ by faith, and have the Spirit, as the Witness of life, and *are* thus of the new creation; though all this is true of every believer; yet our conscious blessedness down here, our happiness, and the power we have over circumstances, depend upon the degree in which we realize that we belong to the *new* creation. (Rom. vi.; Col. iii.) Hence the struggle. Satan seeks to make us, as to this, like “leaky vessels,” so that we must be very watchful, and much in prayer, against every hindrance to our apprehension of things above.

If there be much of the strength of nature, we shall lose the sense of spiritual things. The more we engage in merely natural pursuits and interests—if we care too much about the body—there is danger; not be-

cause these things are sinful in themselves, but because, in so far as we deal with them, we become conversant, and they connect us, with *nature*. Our handling and caring about these things tends to weaken our strength.\* If we are obliged to touch them, the more need have we for watchfulness and prayer. We must be upon our guard in this, and never try to get blessing or strength by beginning in things below, and working upwards. It is not by beginning with our duties here, that we shall raise ourselves up to things above ; we should begin by faith *from above*, saying ' I *have* this portion.' Let us remember, each morning, that we start with the certainty of life in union with Christ at the right hand of God. Thus beginning the day above, and seeking to act in the power of life here, we

\* " No man also *having drunk* of old wine, *straightway* desireth new, &c." Luke v. 39.

shall be able to keep the remembrance of these things upon our souls.

The *neglecting* of this "so great salvation" (v. 3) refers primarily to those found at the end to have been *altogether* neglectors, and who are lost. But it contains a warning to ourselves; for there is danger of the same principles operating, in measure, on the souls of real believers.

It is called "*so great salvation,*" because its greatness depends on what "Jesus, the Son of God," is, and on the life and glory into which we are brought through union with Him. And, if the dignity and glory of Christ are so great—He, of whom it is said, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever"—and if this "salvation" brings us into union with Him, and into His glory—*is it not great?*

\* \* \* \* \*

It is a blessed thing to see the

unity of the Church down here, but how much more blessed will it be when all are manifested in full conformity to the image of Christ—all saved in Him—all gathered around Him—He, the “first-born among many brethren.” Then indeed will it be seen who they are over whom angels have watched, to whom angels have ministered; and what is the nature of that “salvation.”

If the word spoken by angels was stedfast (the apostle argues), how much more should we attend to that spoken by the Lord Himself, (v. 2, 3.) Angels delivered the law to Moses (Gal. iii. 9); they then stood between man and God, as if superior to man. Man was in the place of distance (Ex. xix.; Heb. xii. 18-21), the fitting place for one seeking, through obedience, to win his way back to God. But when the word of life came from the lips of Jesus—that which did not put man

in the distance as a creature who had to obey, but which brought near to God those who believed; for the moment any one received the word, he had life (John v. 24)—we no longer read of angels standing between man and God. There is no place now for angels, for there is no distance.

And mark the great sanction to our faith, the security given here to the message about salvation. It “began (it is said) to be spoken by the Lord”—it “was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him—*God* also (Himself) bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will.” (v. 3, 4.) The moment that message is received, there is life in the soul. In the feeblest glance of faith there is life. And this life, though now hidden, is to be displayed in the day of “the manifestation of the sons of God,” when “the world

to come" is seen to be placed under (not angels, but) the Son of *man*—and, with Him, those who are made partakers of this life. (Rom. v. 17.)

Human nature has already been seen under various conditions.

*As first seen in paradise*, it was innocent and perfect, and yet it was but human nature. All in Adam was natural, (1 Cor. xv. 45—49), and the word of God says, that the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God; that the Spirit alone can search the deep things of God. (1 Cor. ii. 7—16.) \* So that, whatever blessings Adam had as a creature in paradise, however happy he might be in the midst of them—and blessings were showered around him on every hand—yet he did not know the deep things of God. Even an-

\* Note, the emphatic words throughout this scripture (1 Cor. ii.) are "*man*" and "*God*;" they stand towards each other in marked contrast.

gels, I suppose, know not these things except as displayed in Jesus, and then but little, compared to what the Spirit of God (as dwelling in us) has now to reveal to the saints. Yet if angels are thus in the distance, how much more was Adam. Adam is to be looked at as a beautiful type, a picture of what is to be displayed in most excellent glory. There were in him powers of understanding and of affection, which, if enlarged, expanded, and filled with all the fulness of God, would have been blessed indeed. He was a type, a model, or pattern of the form in which God intended to display His own perfections. Though we only see in Adam that which is natural and of the earth, yet there was a glory connected with this. How much more, then, will there be with Him, of whom it is said, "the *second man* is the *LORD* from heaven !"

In this first picture of human na-

ture—mere human nature, though in its best estate—we see it at a distance from God as to communion with Him, as to understanding of His ways, as to everything that constitutes our distinctive blessing now. For what is our greatest blessing? Is it not to be able to say, “I see, understand, and know God—I am IN Him that is true?” (1 John v. 20.)

If we go a little further, we see *Adam ruined by sin*. Here is another picture of human nature. His powers as man remain, yet they are more or less weakened and crippled by what he has done. And not only so, but *sin* has entered into him. Sin is personified in scripture. (See Rom. vi.) It is as if a strange being has come in and taken possession of Adam and of all his weakened powers, stronger than Adam, able to control every thing in him, save only as God interferes to prevent. And then, there is Satan ready to excite and stimulate

all this evil; to set man in direct opposition to God. Enmity to God is in Adam's heart, through sin. And so it remains in his posterity, even in those who are regenerate (Rom vii. viii.); there is that same sin which struggles against the Spirit, seeking to hinder communion, and fixing our souls in the dust of the earth. All the evil, ruin, corruption, and death, under which the whole creation groans, because of Adam's sin, still remain. (Rom. viii. 18—23.)\* So that, whether we look at human nature, in those who are, or in those who are not regenerate, we see it hopelessly ruined; the union between it and sin is everlasting. They are so closely joined that it cannot be otherwise. And all that is "old" must be set aside forever, before there can be *full blessing*.

\* The whole creation has been subjected, through Adam's sin, to the bondage of corruption, yet it is waiting "in hope," for a promised deliverance.

Next we see human nature in a new form *in the Lord Jesus*—not as it was in Adam at the first, neither yet as it is in ourselves. In Adam, while in innocence, there was no weakness, no trial, no pain, no hunger, no thirst, no weariness. Now all these things were found in the Lord Jesus. He had a human body, soul, and spirit ; and there was weakness—yet not sin. He was sinless, but weak. We see in Him human nature that was sensible to trial and sorrow, that could feel the burden and the blow, whether coming from man, from Satan, or from God ; and yet holy human nature. All the sorrows which man as man could feel, He felt ; He was not in Paradise, but in a ruined world, a world of evil and sorrow ; in circumstances, where all was for trial—because all natural circumstances were against Him, and not for Him, as they had been for Adam in the garden. But

more than this, He was in the midst of a people (Israel) peculiarly under the curse of God, on account of the broken law. And on this ground there was still more against Him. He saw not the fruit of His labours—He had to say, “I have laboured *in vain*, I have spent my strength *for nought* and *in vain*.” (Isa. xlix.) Besides all this, He was exposed to the inveterate malice of Satan.

These trials were sent of God (and that is the way in which He ever viewed them) to make Him perfect as the author of eternal salvation (*ch.* v. 8). He had to meet the effects and consequences of sin and the curse, in weak human nature. In this He laboured, and, though having all power as God, He never used His power to relieve Himself from the pressure of sorrow and trial, save as agreeably to the will of God, save as appointed of God.

This was the character of the Lord Jesus, as known in the flesh.

But when He rose from the dead, and entered (the first-begotten) into the glory, all was changed. We see human nature, there, after an entirely new pattern. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Rom. i. 4) All connected with *new* human nature is according to that Spirit. I must think of the nature of God, in order to understand that to which human nature is adapted in Christ. And it is for this God has created us; that nature belongs to us already by faith. (Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10.) Human nature, as we know it, is not *ours*, in the language of faith; it is only like the chrysalis; our proper human nature is to be found above, in the person of our risen Lord. (Phil. iii. 20, 21.) Is it any wonder, therefore, if affliction and

trial be our portion down here? Is not the wonder, rather, that God should grant us so many alleviating circumstances — should open to us His sympathies as He does when He regards us already as part of the *new* creation, looks at us as His children in possession of the *new* things above, and does not consider things below as our proper portion?

Into this glory Jesus has entered. He is set (in title) over the works of God's hands—all power is given unto Him in heaven and earth—though “we see not yet all things put under Him.” (v. 8. 9.) He *has been* proved faithful, He *is* risen, and He *will have*, by and bye, all things in manifest subjection under His feet. This is *our* title too—we shall be glorified together with Him, for we are “joint-heirs;” and the “all things,” means all things, God only excepted.

Who can tell what these “all

things" are? Who can search out God's creative power? Read the Book of Job. (xxxviii.—xlii. 6.) Job quailed under the thought of the creative power of God—can we apply our knowledge of it to the future? And consider what it will be to be put in full power and authority over it all, in union with Jesus. Whether we look at that which is above us, or at that beneath us, all flows from Him, and we are IN Him.

Man was made for power (Gen. i. 26), and it is a blessed thing when exercised according to God. If we were to speak of all things below being put under us, it would be a great inheritance; but all things connected with Christ, things above, are made the portion of those who are *saved*. The picture of blessing is as perfect as God Himself could make it, for we are said to be "*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.*" (Eph. i. 23.)

This is the purpose of God in redemption. That which lay in death He quickens, and having forgiven us all trespasses, He raises us up to fulness in Christ. The knowledge of what this fulness is will burst upon our souls when we rise to be with Christ; and nothing short of this will satisfy us, because we have the Spirit.

Thus united, and with these glorious powers, Christ and those who are Christ's at His coming will be set over, and have to deal with an "inhabited earth,"\* in which sin still remains, and where there will be, therefore, need for the development of grace and mercy.

This will however be but for a little season, and will then pass away, after which *all things* shall be made "*new.*" (Rev. xxi. 5).

\* \* \* \* \*

\* The Greek word used, verse 5, is peculiar, and signifies 'inhabited world or earth.'

“ For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one : for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren ; saying, ‘ I will declare thy name unto my brethren ; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.’ ” (v. 11, 12.) Lest any should say that the Lord’s association, spoken of here, could not apply to those who are in tribulation, sorrow, and reproach (and such a thought would be sure to occur to a Hebrew mind), the apostle brings forward other texts which refer to a period of trial and suffering. Thus the quotation from Isa. viii.—“ Behold I and the children whom God has given me ”—belongs to the “ disciples,” spoken of in verse 16 of the same chapter, and proves that during the time of Israel’s rebellion, a season of darkness and trouble, while Jesus is despised and rejected by the nation there should be given Him those whom He could own as “ chil-

dren," identifying Himself as much with them as with their brethren in future and happier circumstances.

Another question might arise in the mind of a Hebrew, who could easily receive statements of promised blessing; he might say, Was it needful that He, who could bring others into this blessing, who could be a "Captain of salvation" to others—was it needful that *such an One* should be made "perfect through suffering?" Yes (the apostle says), it was needful because of sin. In all things "it *behoved Him* to be made like unto His brethren." If there was sin, there was the need of suffering; and it, therefore, *became God* to prepare the Captain of *salvation*, by making Him perfect through sufferings. (v. 10.)

This word "*Captain*" is a word of great comfort and security to the soul. For who that had the power, would fail to preserve those over

whom he was head? God made Christ pass through the sufferings, completing Him thereby, and He has given Him as "Captain" to those who are saved; so that whatever of strength, or of power, or of skill, is needed, in bringing the "many sons" unto glory, it is all secured to them in Him.

"Forasmuch then as the *children* were partakers of flesh and blood, He also *Himself* likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." (v. 14, 15.) Satan had the right and title of the power of death against these children, and that power must be "*nullified*."\* This Christ

\* The real signification of the word rendered in our English translation "destroy," is that of nullifying or rendering powerless. See also Rom. vi. 6; where it occurs.

effected by coming down into their place—meeting it—bearing it Himself—going through death—rising out of it—and carrying them back with Him, after having passed through it all, into the new creation. So that we stand now on the other side of death, *in the new creation*, and all that power is left behind us. Satan may exert it on that which has not passed through death, but he cannot touch those who are above and beyond it, in Christ. And this all believers are—they are in a sphere which the power of Satan cannot reach. (chap ix. 27, 28 ; Col. iii. 3, 4.)

It was impossible but that Christ must suffer in body, soul, and spirit, *in going through the path of death*. He has bought our safety by agony and death. But He *has* obtained it, and all is past—He is now in the new creation, and all on whom He “taketh hold” (*v.* 16) are there in Him.

These words are not true of men universally, but they are of all who have a title to say, 'I am of the seed of Abraham by faith. (Gal. iii. 7). If an Israelite were not of Abraham's seed in spirit, as well as outwardly, he could not lay claim to this text. (John viii. 33-39). We poor Gentiles (that is, as to the flesh) are not once named in this chapter, nor yet, I believe, throughout the epistle, but we know from other parts of Scripture, that we are, through God's wonderful mercy, made sharers in the same blessings, if, by faith, we too are "Abraham's seed." (Gal. iii. 8, 9, 29; Eph. ii. 19; iii. 6.)

Christ, having passed through death, has freed us, who are of faith, from the terrors of death. To the saints who lived before the resurrection of Christ, darkness was thrown over the future—the gloom of Hades was before them, as of a place of imprisonment (Isa. xxxviii.) But now

the gates of Hades are broken through —He who *was dead*, but who is *alive for evermore*, has the keys of death and of Hades. (Rev. i. 18.) Whatever of sustainment and comfort they might have had ministered unto them of God, these saints could not contemplate a *risen* Christ; they could not say, ‘Because He liveth, I shall live also,’ or, ‘He is gone to prepare a place for me, and when He comes again, I shall be with Him and be like Him.’ This was reserved till Jesus had risen and had sent down the Holy Ghost in testimony to His entrance into the glory; and now we need not fear the prospect of death. All this is opened to us, that there might be triumph and joy, and not fainting; and God can strengthen the soul through faith in these things.

Though, by faith, we speak of having passed through death; yet, in another sense, we are still where

death is, and where it has to be known as to all our feelings and sensations. And this makes us need sympathy. So in these last verses (17, 18), the apostle speaks of the sympathies of our High Priest, as of One who is merciful and faithful, able also to succour. Jesus has suffered Himself under all our trials, and though He is risen out of them now, He has carried back human feelings with Him even into heaven.

We should never let the knowledge of our blessings—of our completeness in glory and in life, harden the heart. This is done when the flesh intrudes itself into the things of the Spirit. It mingles itself with the knowledge the Holy Spirit gives, and hardens the heart, makes it obdurate and insensible to human sorrow, and to circumstances around. There is great need to beware of this, to remember that if we are in Christ

above, we are also here in the midst of the old creation, and that pain, and sorrow, and care, are *real* feelings, that temptations are *real* temptations. Jesus considers them so; He does not say, 'It is nothing,' He knows we have to do with sin, and trial, and temptations, and He cares for us, as One who has passed through these scenes Himself (ch. iv. 15; Acts ix. 4). He does not disregard these things; they call forth His sympathies, His bowels of love and pity. And if so, who are we, that we should despise them? Shall *we* say, 'They are nothing?' No; trials through sin, sufferings, and temptations are not to be despised, not to be fainted under, not to be terrified at, nor looked at with a faithless eye. We need all the power of living sympathy and grace in Christ to meet them rightly. (Phil. iv. 13). Let us be bold in Christ, but not in nature—there is no hardness to sorrow in Him Let

us seek to meet circumstances in the power of the new life, applying to the sympathy and grace of our High Priest above—to the living love of Him, who being *Man*, and having been exercised with all our feelings (sin only excepted), can enter into all our sorrows.

JESUS, my sorrow lies too deep  
For human ministry ;  
It knows not how to tell itself  
To any but to Thee.

Thou dost remember still, amid  
The glories of God's throne,  
The sorrows of humanity,  
For they were once Thine own.

Yes, for as if Thou would'st be God,  
E'en in Thy misery,  
There's been no sorrow but Thine own  
Untouch'd by sympathy !

Jesus, my fainting spirit brings  
Its fearfulness to Thee,  
*Thine* eye at least can penetrate  
The clouded mystery.

And is it not enough, enough,  
This holy sympathy?  
There is no sorrow e'er so deep  
But I may bring to Thee.

It is enough—my precious Lord,  
Thy tender sympathy—  
My ev'ry sin and sorrow can  
Devolve itself on Thee.

As God, Thou graspedst e'en the whole  
Of human misery,  
Thine own alone lay desolate,  
That Thou might'st pitied be.

Thy risen life but whets Thee more  
For kindly sympathy.  
Thy love unhinder'd rests upon  
Each *bruised* ' branch in Thee.'

Jesus, Thou hast availed to probe  
My deepest malady;  
It freely flows, more freely finds  
Thy gracious remedy!

*Lady Powerscourt.*

## THE OLD WINE AND THE NEW.

LUKE V. 39.

(*An Extract.*)

“ No man also having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new ; for he saith, The old is better.”

HERE is disclosed another great secret in human nature—the power of man’s habits and associations ; one which, humanly, so hinders the power of God in his soul. We have been feeding upon the *old* wine (that which the flesh has been providing for us from our birth), and our appetite for the *new* wine (that which the Son of God has brought with Him since nature and the flesh) is spoiled. We are all conscious of this. How can ye do good, says the prophet, who are *accustomed* to do evil ? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? And here the Great Prophet, in like wisdom, warns

us that "no man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new."

And it is a solemn warning. "All things are possible with God," it is true, and, "He giveth more grace." But still we do well to take heed against relishing the old wine. Every thought that we follow, every desire that we indulge, savours of either the old or the new. It is a draught, small it may be, but still it is a draught of one or the other. And this leaves a solemn word behind it, on the heart and conscience of each of us. What are you thinking of, what are you tasting now? we may say to our souls through the day. Is it provision for the flesh you are making, or is it a walk in the sanctuary? Comes it from heaven or from hell? And ofttimes the saint has to learn, to his sorrow and shame at the end, the provision he had been making by the way. The patriarch was not drunk at the beginning, but he be-

came a husbandman, planted a vineyard, and drank of the wine. "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" the soul may indignantly reply; but if the *hidden tempers* of the dog be allowed, his *active fury* will break out in time. "Walk in the Spirit—" that is the divine security—"and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." And surely a little of that walking should enable us to change the speech, and to say, The *new* is better. That is what our blessed Lord would have. The holy, watchful habit of denying the flesh, its tempers and its lusts, will keep the appetite fresh and ready for this new and better wine; and into all this may the gentle and yet strong hand of the Spirit lead our souls daily!

## ESTHER.

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The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honour is humility.—Prov. xv. 33.

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.—Prov. xvi. 18.

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*Suffering first, and then glory, mark the due path or history of the saint.* This has been illustrated from old time. Joseph, Moses, and David, may be remembered in connection with this truth. But it is the *common* history—in a great moral sense, the *necessary* history of those who adhere to God, in a system or world that has departed from Him, and set up its own thoughts. For such must ever be stemming a contrary current.

But there is more than this. *The moment of deepest depression has*

*God?* And He is grace, and to be proved to be such exactly in proportion to our need. Need but becomes, then, the occasion of displaying the suitability of His grace.

All comes to one single point: if we are before God as what we really are, God is always what He really is—*grace*.

This is, in a certain sense, hard work—to live in the continual sense of our need, and of God's delight in supplying it. What constant watchfulness does it argue! what walking in the Spirit! what abnegation of self! The Lord grant us the continual sense of our emptiness, and, also, the continual sense of His fulness, that we may take our true place as dependent on His grace and bounty.

JESUS BAPTIZED, OR POWER  
FOR SERVICE.

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LUKE iii. 1—23.

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It is a very great blessing and comfort to us, to be able to contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ as He was down here, *taking a place among us*. Having once the knowledge of, and spiritual fellowship with Him in what He was as the Son of God come down from heaven—God manifest in the flesh, it comes to be the greatest comfort, when we consider His own glory and majesty, or Whom He came down from, the Father, to see His walk as a man here, to see how He came into all the circumstances and condition in which we ourselves are, to see the path He trod and walk with Him in it. Then we understand, not merely that our poor bodies, through the Holy Ghost, may become vessels of testimony

and of the power of God, He, having left us an example that we should follow His steps, but that there is actual sympathy above that looks down upon us here. As the apostle says, "For we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we, yet without sin," (Heb. iv. 15). There is capacity in Jesus to succour, not only as to power, but by experience, and that experience, not a cold knowledge, such as a physician or surgeon might have of a case, but, the experience of One, who has known, and felt, and understood the way that the gracious supplies of God met the feelings with which He Himself passed through the world and the circumstances of the world, what His soul (as a man), found in communion with the Father. There is nothing gives more of the sense of conscious identification with Him. He *leads us on* in the path of perfectness in which He trod.

This gospel presents Christ as the Son of man, specially in *that* character, as coming down to be a man amongst men. Throughout it, He is presented as Son of man. We have Him, in the former chapter, just after His birth, in infancy; next in childhood; then in youth; and, in this, we begin His public life. It is the only Gospel that shows Jesus as a child of twelve years old. We learn the power of what He was, and the glory of His person, in the way in which He became obedient in the commonest obligations of life—to Joseph and His mother, for instance. It is often, with us, an exceedingly difficult question, how to decide between the claims of the call of God and the authority of the parent. Now Jesus had to do that! He knew that He was the Son of God, and said, (when His mother sought Him in the temple), “Wist ye not that I must be about *my Father's* business?” and yet, at the same time, the moment the

authority of His parents comes in question (the time of His public service not having arrived), He goes down, at once, with them, and is "subject unto them." When Mary said to Him, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing," He had to discern, and He did it perfectly, between the call of God and the authority of the parent. Both were put in their place. On the one hand, showing, that before His mission, He was the Son of the Father, and on the other, that, as made of a woman, and as under the law, he was subject to the mother who bare him, and to Joseph,

He has gone through the same circumstances, and has stood in the same responsibilities in which we stand ourselves, and that *unfailingly*. He came to glorify His Father, at all cost to Himself, by doing His Father's will; and, though He showed the image and character of God, it was in the place of

obedience and duty. Our Lord's love to His mother was perfect, we see this in His remembrance of her, and care, even in that terrible moment on the cross, yet He, who could say, "Mother, behold thy Son," and, "Son, behold thy mother," (confiding her to him, who so to speak, had been His friend and leant upon His bosom), then could likewise say, when first called out into public service, "Woman, what have I to do with *thee*."

And it is just this marks progress in spiritual judgment, I would say in passing, the capacity to discern between things that differ. If really sincere in seeking to *do* the will of God, as His children, if the eye be single, we shall desire to know, in any given case of the circumstances arising every day, *what* God's will is. Now, that word is always true, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." So that, you may be quite sure, if your judgment is not sufficiently

clear, your eye is not *single*; there is something or other (something, perhaps you are unconscious of, and which God may be using this very circumstance to show you, but there is something) hindering. Suppose a subject presents itself to my mind, and I *know* not God's will, there is something which is hindering my *doing* God's will. In that case, if I begin to enquire (not what the circumstances of the case are, and what the results of such and such a line of conduct would be, but) what the motive is that is acting on myself, I shall soon discover my own condition and state of soul which has been influencing me in judging about it. There is never error in judgment, where there is not wrongness in affection. God, in this way, uses the circumstances through which we are passing for the exposure and discovery of what is going on within. And thus it is, that the christian life is unconsciously making progress, because God is putting a man's heart to

the test, when he is fancying he is judging about a circumstance. The Lord will never permit us to judge of right and wrong, truly, as saints, except so far as we have spiritual understanding. If I had merely a direction to do this or that, I should have no real knowledge of God's will. It is said, (Col. i. 9, 10), "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." This, be assured of, if we do desire our hearts to run in the current wherein Christ's heart has run, if, instead of thinking about what the bearing of circumstances may be on our duty, looking outward, we enquire into the motives that lead us to do the thing, we shall find, at once, when self is at work, it is not *Christ*. The moment there is faith, it becomes "*To me, to live is Christ.*"

And, after all, beloved, what are we aiming at, as those who are redeemed? is it not to be what Christ is? Would you like any thing less? When you have got peace (I speak to you as those who have), does it end there? No, it is always increasing blessing. Peace is not the object of the Christian, he has peace—alas! it often comes to be an object. Because a person has not an object, as a saint, having peace, he gets a great many objects before him, and his *christian* life declines. What the Lord looks for, is, our “growing up into Him [Christ] in all things” (Eph. iv. 15). He delights in us in Christ and, doing so, He cannot think of us but in connection with Christ. He delighted in us before the world was; (*Prov.* viii.) “When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: when He strengthened the fountains of the deep: when He

gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment, when He appointed the foundations of the earth: 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."—God the Father delighting in Christ—Christ delighting in us. He comes down to us, and then brings us, out of the place in which we were, up to where He is, and, by the Spirit, gives us delight in what He is.

When the Spirit of God has been working in the heart, the saint can think of the glory of God, as that to which he is being brought, and can rejoice in hope of it. He has known Christ *there*, He has seen Christ *there*, he can delight in Christ *there*, his heart is won, and he learns this, he is to go up to Christ. Finding the Lord Jesus to be there, as the One, not only who is in

glory, but, who has been down here and gone up there, he can say, 'He will have me there, where it is His delight to have me, I shall see Him as He is, and I shall be like Him.' Then the heart gets an object, an object always joyous, humbling no doubt, but always joined with the consciousness of grace, and it carries him onward. "Every man that has this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It is not, at all, a law that says, 'you must be this,' and 'you must be that;' then, I should say, at once, 'I cannot,' and get into despair. His delight is to make you that. I find in Him the object of my affections, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

The Lord Jesus thus presented to us, we are "called," as it is said, "by glory and virtue"—(2 Pet. i. 3), not as the children of Israel, to whom a law was given. That is the Lord Himself is the object set before us. "Virtue"

means moral courage. The grace of God alone can sustain in the way.

The character of the *christian* life, is, that it has an object before it. "Not as though I had already attained" (says the apostle), "either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," &c. (Phil. iii.) You see, beloved friends, Paul had an object before him, he was "pressing toward the mark," &c. This is always accompanied with strength and joy, though, as I have said before, it is humbling, too, because of our failure. Then he adds, "Brethren be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." The

point of the whole chapter, is, that it is Christ (and not a law which demands of us what we have not) that is placed before us, and becomes the source of all we delight in.

Well, how is it with us? Is Christ before our eye?—*the* object that governs our affections and thoughts? Is our only object here to get more like Him? If not, what are we doing? what do we find in having any other object? We may be thinking of future plans for this life, and the like, but, if it be so, is there not a something that is eating away our Christianity? The apostle speaks of some, and that “even weeping,” “enemies of the cross of Christ,” “*who mind earthly things.*” This is how many a Christian man is sinking down. Alas! we often dare not be *Christian* men, because it would connect us with the “reproach of Christ,” or because it might prove an injury to us in our future course. The consequence, is, we become idle and listless,

or else restless, turning in upon ourselves and making our own feelings and experience the centre of our thoughts. And do we get happy with that? no, it is never satisfying. It is only for increased anxiety. Thinking on Christ, all is smooth and peaceful within, and the soul of the saint is enjoying that consciousness of love, which always carries the witness of it, with a prospect that can never be taken away. He knows the road and the difficulties of the road, that it is full of trials and full of snares, and understands, therefore, what made Christ come down and *empty* Himself, as the expression is—see Phil. ii.—“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation” [*emptied Himself*], &c.

He has come down into the very circumstances and condition in which we are, (ever “that *Holy* thing,”

chap. i. 35). I can see Him as a little babe. I can see Him as a child of twelve years old. I can see Him, as "the carpenter, the son of Mary" (Mark vi. 3), at Nazareth. He was living there with His parents, "subject to them"—What fear! He walks in simple obedience—"increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Beyond being the most gracious and gentle in the village, He is just living in nothingness, till the time of His shewing unto Israel.

When God sent John the Baptist, just before, he was not sent in this way. John was in the deserts, clothed with camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, his meat locusts and wild honey. He was to attract attention, standing apart from men, in righteous separation. But that is not Christ's part, He has to come, and say, I will have to do with men ("The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man and

a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," *chap.* vii. 34), because they are apostate from God—just to journey from the stable to the cross, passing through, and mixing with men in the most ordinary common-place circumstances through which we have to pass, and manifest the very light and the grace of God in doing it. He was in more ordinary circumstances than any prophet. As to His form and appearance, "His visage more marred than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men"—a "root out of a dry ground."

Jesus was all this. He stands out, here, as different from men, as by any miracle He ever performed—yet He did not contrast Himself with them. Doing *whatsoever* the Father would have done, yet in the meekness, the gentleness, the simplicity of self-abased obedience.

"And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was

supposed) the son of Joseph," (v. 23).

Could we be content to pass all the best part of our lives thus, unknown, unheeded?

The moment He was brought by God out of this place into public service, where do we find Him? When we see Him on the cross, we see the great expiation for sin—Him who knew no sin, made sin, the just suffering for the unjust. He held a place for us, on the cross, that we had earned, but which He took away. And here (blessed be God), I see Him, again, though not in the same way, in the accomplishment of the counsels of God, identified with me in my circumstances. In tasting death, He stands *instead* of us, here He takes a place *among* us.

In the early part of the chapter, we find John Baptist putting forth the condition of the people. He comes to prepare the way of the Lord. "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being

governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrach of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrach of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrach of Abilene, Annas and Caiphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins: as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (*v.* 1—6). He says, 'here is what God is doing and I am preparing the way,' but at the same time, he says, "Now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree

therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (v. 9). Where should we have expected to find the "mightier One," of whom John spake, whose shoes latchet John was not worthy to unloose? When this announcement came of the terrible day that should burn as an oven, where should we have expected to find Him, whose fan was in His hand, who would thoroughly purge His floor, and would gather the wheat into His garner, burning up the chaff with fire unquenchable?—But where do we find Jesus?—

*"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that JESUS ALSO BEING BAPTIZED"—*

What was this baptism? The "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins!" What brought Christ there?—clearly He had no need of repentance. Even John forbids

Him—"I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me!" but, "Suffer it to be so now." He must take the very place of His people, and, if *His people* have to be baptized with the baptism of repentance, *He* must come down *there*. If "His fan is in His hand," and the grace of God interferes, He must come down into their place.—"Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." 'I am come down for the very purpose (He says) of taking the place and getting into the circumstances and condition of these poor sinners.' He not only says, 'I am come to seek and to save that which was lost,' but, 'I take my place amongst sinners *because the people are there*; I do not make myself an exception to their condition and circumstances, sinless as I am.'

What shall we say?—what an inducement, beloved, to be in the place of repentance, what comfort to the heart, to find Christ there—in the

very place of the sinner. He has come there, and you will never find Him higher up, till you find Him there—under the waters of Jordan, under the hand of John, where *the people were confessing their sins*. That is where you will find Him, and you will never find Him until you find Him there, where He began His journey. It is impossible for Him to reproach you with any thing you have done, for He is taking the same place. His absolute obedience, His perfectness as man, penetrating by the will of God, judges all that is found in every heart, but then if you meet Him *there*, you will find the grace and tenderness of the humbled and lowly One, Jesus of Nazareth, the friend and saviour of sinners, the Son of man and glorious Son of God. He is not looking down from the glory telling us to come up there, if I can find *Him* in the place where my sins have brought *me*, and can hear Him say, ‘I have come down

into this place to meet you in your sins,' I need despair of nothing.

Thus we see the Lord Jesus taking that place in *life* in which He would have us walk. This brings more home the reality of the way He has come into our place, in a certain sense, than even seeing Him in death, because, in death, He stood *instead* of us.

"Now, when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, *and praying.*" The first thing in the place in which He comes into His people's sorrows, I find an expression of dependance upon His Father. The moment we find Him in the people's baptism, He is there "*praying.*" His whole life was that of entire dependance. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Is. xlii. 1). It is the same thing in Gethsemane, the same in principle: "And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples

followed Him. And when He was at this place, He said unto them. 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.' And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and *kneeled down, and prayed*, saying, "Father, if Thou be willing remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done? And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He *prayed* more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," &c. (*chap. xxii.*) Again, in *chap. vi.*, of this gospel, "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and *continued all night in prayer to God.*" The apostle (*Heb. ii.*) quotes, "I will put my trust in Him," applying it to Jesus, 'You see (he says) how truly,' forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise came and took part of the

same, for He says, "*I will put my trust in Him*" [God]. His perfectness as man was to obey, and never to get out of the place of dependance in doing it.

In this place, heaven was opened over Him, and the Holy Ghost, descending, lighted upon Him. The moment He puts Himself in the same line with His people, associating Himself with their sorrows, and the consequences of their sin, He says, 'My very righteousness is to come down.' He does not come a little way down, a little way towards us, as though He were afraid of contamination, He comes down into our actual place. So with the leper, (chap. v.) When the poor leprous man besought Him, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," there was power in Him that could meet the sinful power of the evil and drive it away, but grace also that would bring a hand between Himself and the man full of leprosy, "He

put forth His hand, and touched Him" He alone could do it and not be defiled, "saying, 'I will, be thou clean.' Sinless, He takes the place of a lowly, reduced, and dependant man, and in this place of dependance (prayer is the expression of it), at once, *heaven is opened*. Whenever we have taken our place of nothingness and dependance, there is always the answer of God to it. But I must take my place as a sinner, before I can act as a saint. My conscience and heart must take the place of ruin as a sinner, and, the next thing, my heart must take the place of dependance as a saint. There must be the acknowledgment that "all flesh is grass," or, I cannot pray as a saint.

When God is speaking of comforting His people (Is. xi.) He says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received

of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. . . . . The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I say? *All flesh is grass*, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: *surely the people is grass*" [God's own people, those of whom He says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," surely the people is grass.] "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever." That is the way God comforts His people—"I say unto them that their iniquity is pardoned, that their warfare is accomplished, &c., but now that I am coming to declare all this, where must I put them? They are to be put in the place of utter worthlessness and ruin, as withered grass." There you are all—all flesh—withered grass. Many a christian is desiring to have to say to God on ground short of this. If you take not the place of withered grass,

you are trying to get something from man, trying whether there is not good in the flesh, after all. I must go to Jordan. If the Lord's fan is in His hand, if it comes to be a question of fanning the floor, and of burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire, when "all flesh is grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field," I must go there first, or fanning will be to destruction. Flesh and the people are grass, there is no good to be got from them for God, as the apostle says, "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8). But there is certain and infallible comfort in what follows; if God's people, with all their ordinances and all their helps, is grass, "the word of our God," in spite of it all, "shall stand for ever." Here is perfect ground of certain and infallible comfort.

Having learned that "all flesh is grass," and having submitted myself to the righteousness of God as a sinner,

there comes in the character of the saints' dependance. Finding Christ Himself there, I find that Christ, who, sinless, has taken this place of His people, in grace, can begin to pray, and "heaven is opened." If the grace of repentance and dependance, so to speak, is opened on one hand, heaven is opened on the other. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased," (v. 22).

There was the answer to desire and will by the principle of power.

Having taken our place, come to the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, having emptied Himself, and humbled Himself to *that*, as a man, now (God says) to a man in *this* place, heaven is opened, I have got the repent-

ing man, the praying man, depending thus on me, and I can say, "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased."

The other thing, is, His being anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. "How," said Peter, when preaching to Cornelius and his household, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him," (*Acts* vii. 37, 38). There was not merely desire, not merely dependance, but the answer of God to this position of nothingness and dependance (which we take in Christ, and with Christ), in the bestowment of power.

How am I drawn into this place? Why because Christ has been there—we admire, are humbled, and become conformed through grace. Then comes this blessed *answer*. Do not be satisfied, beloved, with good desires; if

Christ, who was there, walking on unfaillingly in everything, was thus anointed, that is our portion too—to be anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, in order that the desires we have in virtue of our new life, we should be able to accomplish because of the indwelling Spirit of God.

We are brought into the place of conflict and obedience, as saints, because Christ has come down into our place of sin and death. Having begun with Him there, an example to us, He presents the impress of a man living to God, and draws us after Him. Learning Him thus every day, we go on from strength to strength. It will be frequently renewed humbling, because we have not discovered some layers of flesh yet unbroken, but joy, deliverance, love, abounding peace, the spirit of sonship, the Father known as accepting us. There is our place, our first place as Christians, our constant place, and if we go on from trial to trial in the

world, Jesus has trodden the path before us, and we go from strength in the place in which He walked in communion with His Father, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Blessed Master, may we be near to,—*hidden in Thee!*

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REST of the saints above,  
 Jerusalem of God,  
 Who in thy palaces of love,  
 Thy golden streets, hath trod?—

To me thy joy to tell,  
 Those courts secure from ill,  
 Where God Himself vouchsafes to dwell,  
 And every bosom fill.

Who shall to me that joy  
 Of saint-thronged courts declare,  
 Tell of that constant sweet employ  
 My spirit longs to share?

That rest secure from ill,  
 No cloud of grief e'er stains,  
 Unfailing praise each heart doth fill,  
 And love eternal reigns.

The Lamb is there, my soul—  
 There, God Himself doth rest,  
 In love divine diffused thro' all,  
 With Him supremely blest.

God and the Lamb—'tis well,  
 I know that source divine  
 Of joy and love no tongue can tell,  
 Yet know, that all is mine.

And see the Spirit's power,  
 Has oped the heavenly door,  
 Has brought me to that favoured hour  
 When toil shall all be o'er.

There on the hidden bread  
 Of Christ (once humbled here)—  
 God's treasured store—for ever, fed,  
 His love my soul shall cheer.

Called by that secret name  
 Of undisclosed delight,  
 (Blest answer to reproach and shame,  
 Graved on the stone of white)

There in effulgence bright,  
 Saviour and guide, with Thee  
 I'll walk, and in that heavenly light,  
 Whiter my robe shall be.

There in th' unsullied way  
 Which His own hand hath dressed ;  
 My feet press on where brightest day  
 Shines forth on all the rest.

But who that glorious blaze  
 Of living light shall tell ?  
 Where all His brightness, God displays,  
 And the Lamb's glories dwell.

(There only, to adore ;  
 My soul its strength may find,  
 Its life, its joy, for ever more ;  
 By sight, nor sense, defined.)

God and the Lamb shall there  
 The light and temple be,  
 And radiant hosts for ever share  
 The unveiled mystery.

## CHRIST TEMPTED, OR POWER IN CONFLICT.

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It is infinitely gracious that the Lord Jesus should have come down into the very condition in which we ourselves are, although without sin; not only that He has obtained for us another condition (put us into heavenly glory and blessedness,) but, at the same time, come down and taken a place amongst us. It was not so on the cross, there He took a place *instead* of us, not *amongst* us—sinless man “made sin.” But besides that He came *amongst* us. There was the absolute absence of sin in Jesus, not only in practice, but as regards His nature; we are born with sin, He, “without sin;” still He came amongst us, and maintained His place in the midst of sin and temptation. Adam maintained not his first estate. Christ maintained His place all through.

The apostle insists upon it (Heb. iv.) that He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin.

I may speak, in a vague way, of the lustings of sin (the principle of it) in my members as temptations; indeed St. James says, "Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed, &c.;" but when Paul speaks of Christ (who knew no sin) as having been tempted, he speaks of the temptations of Satan. These are always suited to, and presented just in the time and under the circumstances most likely to take effect. Satan acts on *us* through the flesh, and we may meet his temptations either, on the one hand, in the flesh, or on the other, in the power of the Spirit. When Satan is detected, and the new man rejects with indignation his bait, it is a temptation and not a sin. Now every thing was presented to the Lord Jesus, all that was calculated, so to speak (and that just at the seasonable

time) to draw Him aside. The only effect was, to manifest His perfectness He met by the testimony of the *word* the subtlety of the enemy. He says (Ps. xvii.) “Concerning the works of men, *by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the Destroyer*”—not by divine power, but as leaning upon God.

The Lord Jesus had put Himself in the place of lowly, obedient man, as He says, in that beautiful expression of the preceding Psalm, “O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord” (Ps. xvi. 2). He addressed God as Lord, as man, that is what it evidently is, (though Himself Lord of all). He put Jehovah in the place of Lordship. The Psalm begins, “Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust” (i.e. I am perfectly dependant,) and this is quoted in the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews (there are several other places in which it occurs) to show that

Christ came into such a condition as to have to put His trust in God. If in the midst of the church, He (always having the preeminence) sings praise unto God, still He does come down into the midst of the sin, and misery and desolations of His people, and you see how really He became a man, so as to say, "*I will put my trust in Him.*" We know this applies to the Lord, for at the end of the Psalm we find, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." (Compare Acts ii and xiii). "My goodness extendeth not to Thee"—I do not pretend that the place I am taking down here reaches up to divine glory (so, in speaking to the young man, "Why callest thou me good? none is good save one, 'God,'—He had come here emptying Himself, in a word), I have taken the place of a servant, (O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord," the place of a

servant), I leave the place of divine glory, and take the place of man, a servant, identifying myself with the "saints that are in the earth," 'Even let me go back to the glory which I had with the Father before the world was (He says in speaking to Mary, *John* xx.) Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto *my* Father, and *your* Father; and to *my* God, and *your* God.) I take this place in glory—I do not give up being a man, though I go to the glory—I take my place with you there, as I have taken my place with you here.'

In verse 21 of the former chapter, we read; "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that *Jesus also being baptized*—" That was just His taking the place of the people. The baptism of John was the baptism of repentance. Even as man, He was sinless man. But He was to identify Himself entirely with the condition of His people. The Jewish

people (not to go further now) were in a condition to be judged, the Lord's fan is in His hand, but, before He takes the place of Judge, He takes the place of identification with the people to be judged. Just as Christ suffered death (no man could take His life from Him—"I lay it down of myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father.") So, here, too, by grace, He took the place of His people. In this place, He prays (the expression of perfect dependance), and, as the consequence, heaven is opened. Heaven could not open on man until then, but the moment the Lord Jesus takes this place, heaven opens. It is rather different with Stephen (Acts vii. 55, 56), there there is a man upon earth able to look up into heaven. Jesus the sinless and perfect man, God's holy One, having taken this place amongst sinful men, heaven opens, the Holy Ghost descends upon

Him, and He is sealed, as it is said, "Him hath God the Father sealed." Owned as Son of God, He then takes His place among the people as Son of man, and begins His ministry. Thus He completely treads the path we have to tread, accomplishing, and that perfectly, the will of God, but in the path we have to tread—the path of dependence and obedience, of conflict, trial, and temptation. In the face of Satan, as man, He has glorified God on the earth. And this is just what we have to do, only in His strength.

The first thing the Lord does, is to go and take the place of temptation. Having taken this place of service, as Son of man, recognized Son of God (Adam, in a certain sense, was the son of God, *chap.* iii. 38), He must be tempted, and overcome Satan in that world in which Adam had failed, and in the very circumstances in which man found himself because of the fall.

"And Jesus being full of the

Holy Ghost, (as man—you could not talk of God being full of the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost is God,) returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” (v. 1). This is a much more difficult place than that of Adam. Christ was in the wilderness in a “dry and thirsty land, where no water is,” not a single thing to refresh, not like Paradise where Adam was surrounded with every blessing and comfort. He must really enter into the circumstances of man’s condition, in the absence of all sustaining power from without.

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There was in Himself the power of sustainment, but not in the world.

We read here what we do not

in Matthew, of Christ's being "forty days tempted of the devil, (v 2)." The whole forty days, Satan was seeking to exercise the power of darkness on His soul. God sustains us with a thousand mercies, but then Christ, if He comes to bind the strong man, must take the place of the real circumstances of the condition in which man is. He must enter into the intensest power of the ruin, if He must stand against the real power of the temptation, and overcome Satan in the midst of the ruin. That He did. He had the thorough and full sense upon His soul of the condition in which man was in separation from God because of sin. There was all the weight of man's positive, actual separation from God on His soul, these forty days, in the wilderness, just as, afterwards, the weight of wrath upon the cross.

When actually brought into this condition, as far as a soul whose link with God was never broken could be brought (He went through it, but He

went through it with God) Satan begins to act to turn the Lord aside from the path of obedience on which He had entered. Having made Him feel the pressure of the dreadful state in which man was, he begins to act to make Him seek, by His own power and in His own will, to get out of this place.

“And in those days He did eat nothing;” and when they were ended, He afterwards hungered. And the devil said unto Him, “If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread,” (*v.* 2, 3). Christ’s being able to take this place, just showed that His real place was fellowship with God. When man fasts forty days (a thing contrary to nature), it is to get up to God. To Jesus, the extraordinary thing, was, to have to say to the enemy. To us, the extraordinary thing, is, to have to say to God. The devil says, “If thou be the Son of God,” try thy power, and act for thyself—make stones bread—get out of the place of depend-

ance (what Adam the first did). He wants to get the second Adam out of the place of absolute dependance (of saying, "I will put my trust in Him,") to act *for Himself*. The Lord's answer is an example for us. "And Jesus answered him, saying, IT IS WRITTEN,"—by the word of Thy mouth I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer,—"*That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God,*" (v. 4). I depend upon the *word* of God—I wait for that word to eat.

If you look to the place in Deuteronomy whence this is quoted, you will find it was the test of obedience. "And thou shalt remember all the way by which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did

thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live" (Deut. viii. 23). (All the answers of Christ were taken from the book of Deuteronomy.) Here was Christ just brought by the temptation of what was in the world, to prove what was in His heart, and find out whether He would take the place of independance. He says, 'I am in the place of dependance, what He sends, I will take, what He says, I will do; but, let me be the Son of God or any thing else, I will take the place of dependance.' His will never acted. What the creature has fallen into, is, to have a will of his own.

There are two kinds of temptations of Satan; the one, his alluring by that which would draw out of the path of obedience; the other, trial and temptation in the path. Having failed in his object, "when the devil had ended

all the temptation," it is said, "he departed from Him for a season," (v. 13). Afterwards, he came and met him again, as having the power of death, to hinder His obedience in the sacrifice of Himself, and Christ says, 'I will go into death'—"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me, but that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do," (John xiv. 30, 31). So with us; Satan seeks to allure out of the path, and he seeks to terrify in the path. We shall meet with difficulties and trials if we are in the path. To us it is an evil day, in which we have to take unto us the "whole armour of God."

Then he takes the Lord up into an high mountain, and shews unto Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, saying, "All this will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will give it." That was

Christ's right, a glory which He will really have as the gift of God, but Satan says, 'Take this under me, do not go through the trouble and trial of taking it as Son of God—"If thou wilt therefore worship me, all shall be thine."

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, *get thee behind me, Satan: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve*" (v. 8). See *Deut.* vi. 13, x. 20.

It is exceedingly interesting to us that it was not, only, by divine power that the prince of this world was repulsed and could not touch Christ, but, on the contrary, by His taking *man's* place. As God, He could not be tempted, nor yet be an example to us. It is simply by taking man's place, He drove away Satan. And just so with us, if we know how to keep the creature's place, Satan cannot touch us. If we get into our own will, he can. When I get into the place of depen-

dance and obedience, Satan cannot touch me. Were it to help me to take the place of obedience, he would not be Satan; just as, if the flesh was not self-will, it would not be the flesh. John says, "We know that whosoever is born of God," the new nature, "sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." If I remain in the place of obedience, Satan cannot touch me. If the *word* governs me, Satan has done, he must show himself. He acts very subtly, he comes and says, presenting the present pleasantness of the thing, 'This is suiting to you as a man—please yourself—not, 'I am Satan, and come with me to destruction.' If I keep the place of simple obedience, Satan has no power at all, not the least, he has not got in, he is kept outside. That is the way we have to meet Satan. The Lord met Satan by taking, and keeping, the place of obedience. And

this is what we have to do. He repulsed the enemy of our souls by that which is our duty each day.

Again we read:—"And he brought Him to *Jerusalem*" (v. 4), Jerusalem the city of the great king (not the wilderness, taking advantage, there, of natural wants, saying to one an hungry, 'Use thy power and make stones bread'—neither, to Him who had not where to lay His head, shewing the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and offering the power and the glory of them, but) into the place of privilege and promise. He brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence; *for it is written*, He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." (See *Psalms* xci.) Could it be Satan to introduce a true

promise of God? Yes, and he may do the same thing to us. He can quote Scripture, if it be to subserve his purpose, where apparent rejection of the *word* would not avail. We may be in the place of privilege truly ours, of promises that really belong to us, and there the temptations of Satan will have a much more subtle character—that of calling in question the faithfulness of God. He uses the promise, but not in the way of obedience. He takes the Lord to Jerusalem, to the temple, and, ‘Now,’ he says, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down hence; *for it is written*”—It is not the help of God in the path of obedience that is proposed, but, ‘*Act faith* upon this promise—*realize* thy place as Head of the dispensation—*try* if God will send His angels to bear thee up.’ “And Jesus,” for though a SON, He had made Himself a servant, “answering said unto him, IT IS SAID, *Thou shalt not TEMPT the Lord thy God*”

(i.e. thou shalt not put God to the test)—however true this promise, I am to go on in the path of simple obedience, and there is no command on which to act.

*Tempting God*, we often think, is, doing some very great thing in 'faith,' but, *tempting God, is, doubting God.* It is really this in Deuteronomy (vi. 16), from whence the Lord quotes. How did the people tempt the Lord their God in Massah? They murmured against Moses, when there was no water for them to drink, saying, 'Is the Lord amongst us, or not?' not taking for granted that the Lord was there, and able for any thing.

The answer of Christ shewed the principle of obedience as contrasted with the principle of assumption—of the assumption even of true privilege—a most important truth. Satan was talking about promises which had been made to Christ, bringing Him to Jerusalem, the place where pride might

have taken the promises—the Lord takes the place of obedience, and says, ‘No, I am in the place of a servant, and I have no command on which to act’—it was really this, His taking in simple lowliness the place that became dependant and obedient man—‘If I am cast down, Jehovah’s angels will bear me up, but I am not going to do it to prove that I am the Son of God.’ Satan was baffled. This is the place, as for Him, so for us.

There are many sons whom God is bringing to glory, and He has made the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Though He were a Son He had to learn obedience by the things which He suffered. We, too, are sons. Just as He came into our place as man, so by virtue of His death and resurrection, has He put us into the same relation with God in which He Himself stood, that of *sons*. But then, in passing through the world, it is in the place of *servants*, in the

place of obedient men. It may seem as humble as any thing can be, but, if my will is acting in a matter, I am throwing myself in the devil's power; God may restore me and bring me back, but my act is taking me out of the care of God, though not putting me out of the place of being a son. Our place is the place of lowly obedience, and our answer is the simple *word* of God. If we are humble, God will help us with the suited portion. The word, here, is just suited, it was the answer of lowly obedience, not of wonderful wisdom, but of lowly obedience. "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season."

We may find artful practisings of Satan against us in the right path, just as we find allurements to take us out of it. We need not be frightened at that, if we are constantly sensible of our own weakness. Christ was sensible of weakness, He was crucified

through weakness. So sensible was He of it, that He asked His disciples to stand by Him in the Garden—"Tarry ye here and watch with me." But He looked at once to His Father. He did not wrestle against trials. In the consciousness of the place into which He had come, He looks simply to the Father. It was no question to Him of Judas, it was no question to Him of Pilate, or of the chief priests, it was *the cup which His Father had given Him*. He said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—still "the cup which my Father hath given me, *shall I not drink it.*" In agony about it, sweating great drops of blood in the prospect of it, still He has it from the Father, and being His Father's will, that is the place of simple obedience.

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," (v. 14). He had come from His baptism into the wilderness led of the Spirit, and He

comes out of the wilderness, after His temptation, in the power of the Spirit. And then, having, as the stronger, bound the strong man, He goes to spoil his goods. There is no temptation we go through with God that is not power gained. It has been conflict with the power of the enemy and his power is broken. Our natural portion, as saints is joy, but as these are motives to be sifted, hard bits in our hearts that need ploughing up (we know how wretchedly deceitful these hearts are) so we have need of temptations. When simply passing through it by maintaining the place of obedience that which would have given him a place is broken, and I can act aggressively against his kingdom. It has been tried, and sifted, and broken. If a man goes into battle with his head bare, he is likely to be struck, and the more forward he is in the battle, the more likely to be struck. Saints who are most forward in testimony, if not simply in the place of

*obedience*, make the most terrible falls. It is not that the place they are in is a wrong place, but *they are in a wrong condition for it*. The victory we have gained in the evil day is power for active service—we return in the power of the Spirit. When there is not this simple, lowly plan of obedience in the time of sifting we do not return in the power of the Spirit but Satan gains an advantage over us. The Lord may restore. There are two ways in which I may have Christ. I may have Christ for my failures. Or, I may have Christ for my power in walk, in communion. Blessed is it to have Christ for my failures, but it is evidently a far more blessed thing to have Him in present communion and for power. We have Christ in both these ways. We need Him, and He graciously meets our need, for failure. I do not mean in atonement. If I fail under law, condemnation is the result. If I fail under grace, it puts grace in motion—we

have an "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." But then there is the more blessed thing of being companions of Christ in conflict.

There there is communion of joy (exercise and trial of heart, no doubt) but joy in, and power for it.

Well; it is blessed to see that Christ did come down to our place, into the midst of the difficulties and trials in which we find ourselves—our example of lowly obedient service in the path, the very path we have to tread as saints, the path of conflict and obedience; Leave the latter, and we fail in the former. The Lord had no object but obedience, we often have an object that is not obedience, He had no object but obedience, "*Lo I come to do thy will, O God.*"