

WORDS OF TRUTH

FOR THE
SAINTS OF GOD.

FIFTH SERIES.

“ 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 xvii. 11.

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THAT the Lord may use these pages, to the glory of His own name, in the comfort, edification, and guidance of His people, is the prayer of the compiler.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

A CHRISTIAN—WHO, AND WHAT, IS HE, NOW, AND HEREAFTER?

*** A question proposed as a subject for consideration at a meeting of Brethren in Christ.

It is rather a solemn thing to say *what* a Christian is, especially when we think of what it is that made him one. God is acting, so as to glorify Himself. It is a solemn thing to be a revelation of that of which Christ is worthy—of the result of Christ's work, as it is said, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." (Is. liii. 11). It does us good to think of this, because it makes us judge ourselves, to see how far we are really that. Not that we ever shall be the perfect display of it, until we are "like Him," (1 John iii. 2), until we see Him as He is, and are conformed unto His image in glory.—Still, if

inheritance is connected with our being children, — “*if children*, then heirs, &c.” (the moment I get a person in the position of a child, I get an heir.) The reigning part we find connected with suffering—“*if we suffer with Him* we shall also reign with Him.” Both these things are, no doubt, spoken of the Christian, still this is the principle, “if we suffer with Him, &c.”

Again: there is another character which this statement suggests to the mind, and that is his *priestly* character. I but refer to this now. We are kings and priests unto God. In taking up this, it would be interesting for us to see the present intercessional character of priesthood; for, in reigning, by and bye, it will be as a royal priesthood, rather than intercessional.

GIDEON, GOD'S MIGHTY MAN OF VALOUR.

Judges vi.—viii.

THE history of Gideon is of much practical importance. It is the history of one of those revivals in Judges, so peculiarly applicable to the present circumstances and need of the Church.

Every now and again, (as we learn in the previous chapters of this Book, which will be seen, at once, to be occupied throughout with the failure of Israel, when placed in the land into which Joshua had brought them in blessing), Israel had been sold into the hands of their enemies. Groaning under the consequences of their sin, they had cried unto the Lord; and the Lord, ever faithful, had raised up some one, as a de-

liverer out of the hands of those that spoiled them. He was grieved with the afflictions of His people. He judged their sin and evil; yet, at the same time, pitied and saved. But then, the persons, by whom He wrought, were always, in themselves, insignificant. We do not find revivals beginning from the head. Very generally, when there has been anything of a recovery from the doctrines and traditions of men, it has taken place through the instrumentality of some obscure individual, raised up in the energy of the Spirit.

Such a "*saviour*" was Gideon.

"The children of Israel, (we read) did evil in the sight of the Lord, and *the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years.*" (chap. vi. 1.)

The Midianites knew not that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel into their hands, yet, in reality,

they were but the rod, with which it pleased Him to punish His people. As with the Assyrian.*—"O Assyrian, the rod of *mine* anger, and the staff in thine hand is *mine* indignation, &c." When He has done with His rod, He can break it, or burn it. "Shall the axe boast itself against Him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against Him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood." Satan himself is, very often, the rod used by God for the discipline of His children.

"And the hand of Midian *prevailed against Israel*." Nothing could have prevailed against them, had they been faithful to the Lord. "And because of the Midianites, the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and

* Is. x.

caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came up as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their cattle were without number; and they entered into the land to destroy it. *And Israel was greatly impoverished* because of the Midianites." (v. 2—6.)

They were in a sad condition.

"And the children of Israel *cried unto the Lord.*"

This is always the first symptom of anything like a revival. When the people of God, instead of saying

that they are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, feel how really poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked they are, and that they can only receive that which God is pleased to give, He is about to interfere and raise them up.

The sin of the Church has brought it into desolation. Yet, little real cry has gone up to the Lord!—and wherefore? We are not aware of how far we have departed from our original standing. We have got so much of the *world's* dignity, and influence, and riches! These things, though they hide us not from God, or from Satan, are hiding, from ourselves, our real poverty. Did we but know our destitution, did we but cry unto the Lord, He, “when He saw that there was none shut up or left,” would deliver and raise up. Whether as to Israel, or an individual, or the Church, the lesson needed to be learnt is the same, that of its impo-

verishment and destitution. No matter how poor we are, if sensible of our poverty ; for there is all fulness in Christ.

“ And it came to pass, when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you out of Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them forth before you, and gave you their land : and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God ; fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell ; *but ye have not obeyed my voice.*” (v. 7—10).

He, first of all, shews them their sin, as He did when they could not

take Ai. There the secret of their impoverishment is found out. 'You are crying unto me now, (He, in effect says), because you feel your impoverishment; but the real cause of your impoverishment is this, you have sinned against me.' They had none to blame but themselves. So with the Churches in the Apocalypse. And, therefore, the word to them, "*Repent.*"

God had been faithful to Israel, but Israel had not been faithful to God. This was the point of the prophet's testimony. He ever vindicates His own conduct. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." Were we walking as He would have us neither the world, nor the flesh, nor the devil, could prevail against us. Whenever we find ourselves under the power of our enemies, we must be sure to charge the fault on ourselves, and not on God. Does Joshua lie

on his face, because the people have turned their backs before the men of Ai, the Lord says to him. "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou on thy face? *Israel hath sinned.*" Joshua ought to have known that sin in Israel, not any changeableness in God, was the cause of their being smitten. The Lord would not be amongst them any more, until they had put away the accursed thing. Could He go out to bless iniquity? Nothing can weaken our hands but sin; "greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world."

Whether in the restoration of an individual soul, or of a body of saints God will have it acknowledged that there is no failure in Him, but that we have suffered because of our own sin and folly.

Having testified of their sin, the Lord, next, raises up for them the instrument of their deliverance.

“And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites.”
(v. 11.)

Not anything could have been more abject than the condition of Gideon, as described here:—*stealthily* threshing wheat, (for fear of the Midianites), to feed his family! But here is one whom the Spirit of God delights to make mention of; whose name, unrecorded of man, is thought worthy to be recorded by Him.* The Spirit of God writes to magnify the grace of God, not to exalt man. He would have us bear in mind such little incidents as that noticed here, in the history of the soldiers of faith, in order that we may see, by what weak and insignificant instruments God works. His mightiest victories

* Heb. xi. 32—34.

have ever been won by such ; and not by those who had resources in themselves.

“And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.*” (v. 12.)

What a remarkable salutation ! Stealthily threshing wheat to hide it from the enemy, looked not like valour ! To the human eye, there was everything that betrayed depression of spirit. But God’s “mighty men” have ever been such as were arrant cowards in themselves, men distrustful of their own strength and wisdom, in coping with the enemy—“*out of weakness made strong.*” None are “mighty men of valour,” but those to whom it has been said, “The Lord is with thee.” When God calls a person by a name, He makes that person what the name imports. But He takes the most abject man of an abject tribe, to make

him His "mighty man of valour."
"Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." (1 Cor. i. 25—29.) God works not, ordinarily, by such; The credit would, then, be given to *our* wisdom, *our* influence, and the like, and it is written, "No flesh shall glory in His presence." He takes "the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world, to confound the mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." Is Timothy exhorted to "fight the good fight of faith," it is, as one, "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." To every Christian it may be said, as Paul writes to those at Corinth, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong; but again, we

are told to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, *why* then is all this befallen us? and *where be* all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." (v. 13.)

His heart has been touched, and prepared of the Lord, for the work to which he is called. He has a deep sense of the condition of Israel upon his soul, though he is without the power to help them; and he has been comparing that condition with the title, and power of the Lord. This is the way of faith. It is not for us to be comparing ourselves among ourselves, we should compare our condition with the title and will of the Lord to bless. Is not something of this sort the language of many a

saint now?—Can it be possible that the Holy Ghost is in the Church, whilst, at the same time, the Church is so worldly, so divided? is it at all like what it was in the Apostles' days? The answer of the Lord to the cry of Israel discloses the secret of our condition. We have sinned. We have not obeyed His voice. And, if awakened to the sense of what we have lost, oft times, there has not been the acknowledgment of our sin in departing from God, and it has, therefore, only led to fretfulness and impatience, or to wrong pretensions. Gideon sees the *Lord's* hand to be upon His people, and that because of sin. But he identifies himself with the people. He might have said, 'Israel has sinned,' or 'Satan has driven us here;' and, then, there would have been no hope. He cannot understand the Lord's presence, without making his people happy; and he,

at once, loses sight of himself in his interest in, and thoughts about, the people of God, as God's people, and says, "If the lord be with *us*, why has all this evil befallen *us*? *the Lord has delivered us, &c.*"

"And the Lord looked upon Gideon, and said, *Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites—have not I sent thee?*" (v. 14.)

The Lord looked upon him. That is the first thing. The man who is really strong and mighty, is he who has thus got into the secret of Israel's impoverishment. The Lord has looked upon him. The Lord has identified Himself with him, and shewn His heart to be towards him. There is no limit to his might.

But does Gideon feel himself to be a strong man? No! never before had he so known his own weakness, and insignificance; never had

he so felt the poverty of his father's house, as now.

“And he said unto Him, Oh my Lord, *wherewith shall I save Israel?* behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.” (v. 15.).

Thus it is always with the soldiers of faith. They have never felt their own weakness, so as they feel it, when called to be God's mighty men of valour. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.” People often say, ‘I want to *feel* that I am strong.’ What we need is, to feel that we are weak; that brings in Omnipotence. We shall have a life of feeling by and bye, in the glory, now we are called upon to lead a life of *faith*. What saint but knows, from the experience of the deceitfulness of his own heart, that had we power in ourselves, instead of in Christ, *we* should be something. This is what God does not intend.

“Wherewith shall I save Israel?” His threshing instrument would have been a poor thing indeed to look to as that “wherewith” to go against the host of Midian. Never, we repeat, had he felt the poverty of his father’s house, as now. When God is about to use a man, He makes that man feel most consciously nothing, in himself. If He delivers by Gideon’s hand, *He* must have the glory, not Gideon; *His* must be the strength, not Gideon’s. It is always as it should be, when we drop down into our nothingness. Strong in the Lord, we are weakest in ourselves. Can we not, almost invariably, trace our failures to self-confidence? When a believer thinks that he is going to do a feat, his failure often becomes ridiculous. God must abase that which is proud and lifted up.

“And the Lord saith unto him, *Surely I will be with thee.*”

As with David, in another fight of

faith, there was no sword in the hand of Gideon, not anything "wherewith" to go against the Midianites. But what matter of that? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He goes not forth unarmed. "Surely I will be with thee; and (as a consequence of that) thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Here, then, is the mighty man of valour, and here is his armour.

Gideon asks a *sign* :—

"And he said unto Him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then shew me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee."

There is feebleness, doubtless, here; he ought to have had simple confidence, and not have needed a *sign*; still all he really cares for, is, having the Lord with him.

“And He said, I will tarry until thou come again.”

“And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour : the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight.

“And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God, for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face.”

Another mark of feebleness, (we do not see this fear in Abraham under similar circumstances). But the Lord will give Gideon confidence to stand before Him.

“And the Lord said unto him,

Peace be unto thee ; fear not : thou shalt not die." (v. 17—23.)

Is there not most important instruction for ourselves in all this? Faith has that to present to God, which He can accept. Whatever our own failure, still Jesus is the same, the value of His work is unchanged. There has been, of late, an awakening to a good deal of busy activity in service; but God never says to a soul, 'Peace be unto thee, fear not,' because of service. We are in danger of putting service in the place of the burnt-offering. Where this is done, the soul gets weighed down, not being able to find satisfaction in the service, instead of going on in happy liberty of spirit.

Gideon's heart reassured, he builds an altar there unto the Lord, and calls it JEHOVAH—SHALOM. (v. 24.)

And now he is prepared for service. He has been under God's tutorage.

He has learned where his strength is (he no longer says), "wherewith shall I save Israel?" And the Lord has given him confidence to stand before Him. But *where* does He set him to work?—with the Midianites? No, not in the least. He has to begin the Lord's work at home, with that which is nearest to himself.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's youngest bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal, that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of the rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down." (v. 25, 26.)

There, judgment commences. We must "cease to do evil," before

we "learn to do well." The Lord comes to us as "the God of peace;" still it is, '*Down with the idols in your father's house.*' We may have been restless in service; but, in the midst of much doing, how little have we done this, or ever, practically, attempted to set up God's altar "in the ordered place." Man's *will* has not been invaded. It is of the essence of wilfulness to say, '*I have a right to worship God how I like.*' Obedience to God is the saint's rule and liberty. Not all the powers in the world have a title to interfere with this. And, moreover, if God says, 'Pull down the altar of Baal,' He will give strength to do it.

How does Gideon act? His conduct is that of simple faith and obedience.

"Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, *and did as the Lord had said unto him*: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he

could not do it by day, that he did it by night." (v. 27.)

He acts unhesitatingly.

And what is the consequence? Immediate opposition.

"When the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold the altar of Baal was cut down, and the grove was cut down that was by it (the grove might add beauty to the altar of Baal, but God's altar must be set up in its native simplicity), and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this? And when they enquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it." (v. 28—30.)

The action of faith always excites the flesh. Israel knew not where their strength was, they thought it in Baal. Gideon had learned it to be in God. These are sifting times. In the Lord's day everything was in beautiful order, apparently ; but because He was setting aside men's traditions, all were against him. So now. How many suppose the strength of Christians to consist in the things they see around them. The soul taught of God knows it is only in Jehovah Jesus.

“ And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save Him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning : if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down *his* altar. Therefore on that day he called him *Jerubbaal*, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he has thrown down his altar.” (v. 31, 32.)

It was of no use to argue the case, except to show the people the folly of pleading for Baal. If the things set aside were Baal's, and Baal was a god, surely, he would arise and take their part. It was of no use to debate. And do not let us suppose that all the arguments of all the good men in the world can make that which is evil, good. It is melancholy, indeed, to see the arguments that are devised by the wit of men in vindication of evil.* The bounden duty of the saint is to separate from evil, however sanctioned by antiquity, or anything else.

The name "Jerubbaal" was no defence. On the contrary, it brought

* It is a most fearful instance of the want of a sound mind, when we find so much perverse ingenuity, so many subtleties, so many analogies drawn, in order to lull the awakened conscience into contentedness with evil.

up the question *whether there was power in Satan now that faith was in exercise.*

When mixed up with the world, Satan has no occasion to disturb us. Let him be alarmed, and up come Midianites, Amalekites, &c.—“*Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel.*” (v. 33.)

Here is Gideon, with his own people against him, and the enemies of Israel gathered together and pitching in Jezreel. But he has peace with God, and the Lord is (so to speak) bound to appear on his side. How does he act? The Spirit of the Lord comes upon him, and he *blows the trumpet*, and Abiezer is gathered after him, (v. 34.) Had Gideon been serving Baal, he could not have blown the trumpet thus.

But Baal is down, and the altar of God is set up in the ordered place. He sends messengers throughout all Menasseh, who also are gathered unto him, and to Asher, Zebulun, and Napthali, and these all are gathered around the man, who is least in his father's house, the poorest of the tribe of Manasseh, but to whom *the Lord* has said, "Go in this thy might."

There seems still to have been a measure of distrust in Gideon's mind. (v. 36—40.) He asks a fresh, and double sign that the Lord will save by his hand, as He had said, *proving* by the fleece, both wet and dry. The Lord grants his desire; and he is sent forth with the confirmed assurance of his divine call and mission, to "turn to flight the armies of the aliens."

Again let us remark, *faithfulness begins not with the Midianites, it*

begins at home. This is a great principle (whether as to an individual soul, or as to the Church of God). Gideon must attack the evil inside his father's house, and in the midst of Israel, before he is used of the Lord to save Israel out of the hands of the Midianites.

The moment there is a thorough sense of grace, the word is "*Go in this thy might.*"

He is set up as captain of a large army ; and now he stands forth to confront the enemies of Israel, and of the Lord.

"Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod : so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them by the hill of Morah, in the valley." (chap. vii. 1).

This is God's way of acting. He

never honours us, when we are thinking that *we* are anything. Great blessing has often been preceded by our deep humbling, by humbling, even, sometimes, in the eyes of others? We were brought low, and the Lord lifted us up.

But Gideon has a still further lesson to learn, (one painfully our own). He has known the acceptance of his offering. The youngest of an idolatrous household, he has built an altar to the Lord, and begun to destroy idolatry. But he has yet to be taught, that there is not a bit more courage or prowess, really, in the men that had gathered after him, than in himself.

“And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to deliver the Midianites into their hands, *lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, mine own hand hath saved me.*” (v. 2.)

At once, he has to get rid of a great number of them.

This is done, first of all, by means of an ancient ordinance of Moses. The Lord tells him. "Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is *fearful and faint-hearted*, let him return, and depart early from Mount Gilead." (Compare Deut. xx. 8.) God's great design in His dealings, was to teach Israel to trust in Himself. He wants to find in His people a *true heart*. A true heart makes a strong hand. Having confidence in the Captain of our salvation, and not in ourselves, we faint not at the sight of our enemies, but reckon, with *true-hearted* Caleb, that "we are well able to overcome them."

And there returned of the people *twenty-and-two-thousand*. And there remained *ten thousand*." (v. 3.)

Do we not know what this means? We know that the Lord Jesus sent

forth the proclamation.—‘Let those who will follow me count the cost.’ “foxes have holes, (told He one, who had said unto Him, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest”), and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head”—and, then, there was fearfulness and faint-heartedness. When there was nothing but Christ, and everything else was against them, many turned back, and walked no more with Him. Confidence in the flesh must be renounced; God will not use the flesh.

The present is an age when people are coveting to know a little about everything. Were God to employ the learning of learned men, the influence of men of rank, and the like, the church would say, ‘We have saved ourselves.’ Those who have had what are called “the advantages of a good education,”

find that He says, "Set your learning, your wisdom, your influence aside, I cannot save *by these*. The use to be made of these things, is to say of them, with Paul, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Often are these much coveted things found hindrances in the way of those who possess them, and the great thing to be done, in conflict, is to keep them under. God will not allow human learning, influence, moral character, or aught else, to come in as any item in our deliverance. He is very jealous of all man's substitutes for, and imitations of, the power of the Holy Ghost. In stripping ourselves of such things, we may seem to others to be throwing away our influence, and our usefulness? what is "doing good?" The doing of God's will. And God is faith's sufficiency. To all appearance, Gideon was weakening his own hands; at

the first proclamation, twenty-two thousand left him ; but, in reality, instead of losing strength, he was gainer, by their departure. These fearful and faint-hearted ones would have discouraged the rest had they remained amongst them—"Let him go and return unto his house, *lest his brother's heart faint, as well as his heart.*" The flesh is very bold in word ; but, when it comes to the point of trial, with Peter, it curses, and swears that it knows not Jesus. There is a great deal of "philosophy and vain deceit" going about now. "Beware lest any man *spoil* you," says the apostle. Were all the trappings of the flesh laid aside, we should discern how little real spiritual energy there is amongst us. Do you ask, 'What shall I study?' Study well these four words—"the *flesh profiteth nothing.*"

“ And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many ; bring them down unto the water, *and I will try them* for thee there : and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee ; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go.” (v. 4.)

There is such a thing as the trial of our faith ; and, whilst we, very often, should be quite unable to test one another, God knows the best way of doing this as to each.

“ So he brought down the people unto the water : and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself ; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were THREE HUNDRED men : but all

the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, *By the THREE HUNDRED men that lapped* will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand : and let all the other people go every man unto his place. So the people *took victuals in their hand*, and their trumpets : and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those THREE HUNDRED men. And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley." (v. 5—8.)

God's ways are strange to sense. The infidel scoffs at them. These people were really not afraid (as those who departed before) to go to the battle ; they were all of them soldiers girded for war—the test was this, whether, in that thirsty day, they would lap the water, putting the hand to the mouth, or bow down and drink at their ease. The THREE HUNDRED chosen ones (those by whom the

Lord was about to work) had not time for halting, their hearts were in the work, and they merely took a draught as they went on their way.

The apostle speaks of being "entangled with the affairs of this life" (2 Tim. ii. 4); all that we can safely take, would we "please Him who has chosen us to be soldiers," is just a draught by the way. There is a very great difference between being *in* the circumstances of this life, and being *entangled with them*. When tested by the Lord, those who bowed down were not fit for His use, any more than (though they were not) the fainthearted. They must go to their homes.

Glory is (for all who believe) God's answer to the work of Christ; grace is followed by glory, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Instead of its being this, the devil seeks to put it before the soul on

the ground of our devotedness and zeal. At the same time, beloved, would not you and I that our place should have been with the **THREE HUNDRED**? Shall we let slip the opportunity of confessing Jesus, because we are saved? In the experience of almost every believer there is a *being brought down to the water*—some turning point, when he either goes onward in devotedness to the Lord, or, otherwise, sinks down into a mere common-place Christian. Not one of us is too obscure to be tried whether he will seek God's honour, or present things, *first*.

Gideon (instructed that the battle is the Lord's, and that he must get rid of all encumbrances) is next shewn his enemies.

“And it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Arise get thee down unto the host,

for I have delivered it into thine hand." (v. 9.)

It is a blessed thing to be shewn our enemies and told, with Gideon, that the Lord has delivered them into our hands. Our old man is "crucified" (Rom. vi. 6), the world "overcome," and its prince "judged." (John xvi. 33, 11). If we are walking by faith, as risen with Christ, Satan, the world, and the flesh are under our feet.

And mark, further, how graciously the Lord anticipates the need of His servant, in adding:—

"But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant, down to the host: *and thou shalt hear what they say*; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host." (v. 10, 11.)

Not anything could be more alarming, than to see the fearful odds that are against the people of faith—the world, the flesh, and the

unceasing hostility of Satan!—who would not be faint-hearted, if we saw but this? God is pleased to let Gideon hear what is in the Midianites' hearts. So, too, is He pleased to let us know, very often, what is in the hearts of our enemies. “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” lets out the secret. And as to the men of the world, there is not one in a hundred of them but that has the fullest conviction that Christians are right; yet, because they have numbers on their side, they try to persuade themselves to the contrary. Almost everything he hears bids the intelligent Christian, ‘Be strong.’

Let us follow Gideon.

“Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east, lay along in the valley like

grasshoppers for multitude ; their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude. And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, *a cake of barley bread* tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, *This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel : for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.*" (v. 12—14.)

Divine encouragement is never to the puffing up of the flesh. Anything of pride and self-importance must have been sorely wounded. When God will shew His favored servant the things that are coming to pass, and that he shall smite the Midianites as one man, He makes him feel,

that (in himself) *he* is but as a “cake of barley bread.”

And is there not instruction for ourselves in this? Were Christians, stripped of their worldliness, more really like the “cake of barley bread” (the most homely thing possible), the world would stand more in fear of them. We have clothed ourselves with its trappings, and desired its respectability, so that it thinks we are obliged to go to it for help. There is an unhealthy kind of zeal, often found amongst us, which makes a person ask himself, How shall I *give a testimony*? rather let each saint seek to shew forth “the mind that was in Christ Jesus.” A man, always anxious to prove himself an honest man, we should begin to suspect; and, if a person is always so very anxious to prove that he is a Christian, it is doubtful whether he yet knows much of the mind of Christ. Let us quietly subside into

simple, God-fearing, God-acknowledging Christianity, and, though, outwardly, as a cake of barley-bread, the world would feel about us, as the Midianite speaks of Gideon to his fellow.

“And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he *worshipped*.”

Before he goes to battle, he worships in the full confidence of victory. The worship of faith is always the worship of *confidence*. Were we more really, in our own eyes, the “cake of barley bread,” there would be more abounding praise.

He worshipped ;—“and returned into the *host of Israel*, and said, Arise ; for the Lord hath delivered into your* hand the host of the Midianites.” (v. 15.)

* Here again there is the setting aside of self. He does not say, “into *my* hand,”

What is this "host of Israel"? THREE HUNDRED men! The Midianites are "as grasshoppers for multitude," the Lord's "*host*," but a handful of men! It is most important to see the dignity attached to the THREE HUNDRED. God (as we have before remarked in the history of this mighty man of valour) reckons, not according to what we are in ourselves, but according to that which He *makes* us.

And had He actually delivered the Midianites into the hand of Israel? No. Neither, as yet, is Satan actually under our feet, though *faith* counts him to be. Had Gideon said, 'I will not believe before I get the spoil,' that would have been unbelief.

And now comes the conflict.

but "into *your* hand." The Lord had said, "into *thine* hand." (v. 9), and the Midianite "into *his* hand." (v. 14).

“ And he divided the THREE HUNDRED men into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise : and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be, that as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.” (v. 16—18.)

The weapons of their warfare were the most foolish things imaginable, —trumpets, pitchers and lamps in the pitchers! Faith’s weapons must be mighty through *God* alone.

“ So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch; and they blew the trumpets, and

brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal; and they cried, The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon! And they stood every man in his place round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the THREE HUNDRED blew the trumpets, *and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow*, even throughout all the host: and the host fled to Beth-shittah in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-meholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manassah, and pursued after the Midianites." (v. 19—23.)

These things shall yet be acted over again. *Now*, the weapons wherewith we have to fight are tes-

timony by word of mouth and our own insignificance. Our power is in giving testimony to Jesus, and never getting out of the place of being but "earthen vessels." We must remember, that the vessel only contains the light, let us not pretend that is is the light. The excellency of the power must be of *God* and not of *us*.

"And Gideon sent messengers throughout Mount Ephraim, &c."

Impotent in ourselves for blessing (and having found this out), but having proved the blessedness of simple dependance upon God, we can, with Gideon, call upon others to have fellowship with us. (v. 24, 25.) But let us not be setting up ourselves. Every thing depends upon the presence of the Holy Ghost, ungrieved, unhindered. Let this be told, and let us hide ourselves.

The men of Ephraim are seen at the close of chap. vii. slaying Oreb

and Zeeb. (They are allowed to come in for blessing, in result.) Now they turn and chide with Gideon for not having called them at the first.

“And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? and they did chide with him sharply” (chap. viii. 1.)

This is just what the *half-hearted* Christian does. He is very angry at not being associated with those who are whole-hearted. But whose is the fault? Whenever there is any energy of the Spirit of God working in the church, the language of the men of Ephraim is the language of such—‘Why not have taken us with you?’ Faith’s answer is very simple, ‘Because, then, we must have gone on *your* ground,—what we have to do, is, to go wherever the Lord leads, we cannot stop to make compacts and agreements.’ No one Christian

has a right to stop on his way for another; he must go forward himself in individual faithfulness. The effort to drag others along with us, is, in reality, but a device of Satan to keep ourselves back. Note the Lord's word to Jeremiah, "Let them return unto thee; but return not thou to them" (Jer. xv. 19). Are any desirous of going forward, let them not stop to carry along with them "the men of Ephraim." Far better is it to go on with but few to follow, than to get numbers with us who are only half-hearted.

"And Gideon said, *What have I done now in comparison of you?* Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer? God hath delivered into *your* hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I to do in comparison of you?" (v. 2, 3.)

Let us mark this. Where the power of God is most working, there

is always the deepest grace, and the consciousness that all that we are, we are by the grace of God. What a manifestation have we here of the mind that was in Christ. How graciously did the Lord speak of His poor, failing, faithless disciples ; “Ye are they,” said He, “that have continued with me in my temptations.” (Luke xxii. 28). Gideon esteems others better than himself. Not any thing so hinders blessing (individual or collective) as a feeling of superiority to others. The exercised soul will judge itself, whilst it sees that which is done by another in the light of grace. Gideon casts himself and his **THREE HUNDRED** in the shade, and brings into prominence the victory of the men of Ephraim. If honest in self-judgment, have we not at times detected in ourselves something of an inclination to overlook grace in other saints because they “followed not with us?” Grace is

able to fasten on that in a brother that is pleasing to God, and seeks to bring it out, passing over, in so doing, very much there may be, along with it, of failure. Jesus knew, and perfectly, the weakness and failure of His disciples, though He addressed them as He did. It is a blessing when we can sink ourselves, that others may come into prominence. "Let your light," it is said, "so shine before men, that they may see your good works (not, you), and glorify (not you, but) your Father which is in heaven." If any chide with us, let us seek grace to go down, and take the lowest place, and give them credit.—"Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that." (See Prov. xv. 1.)

"And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the THREE HUNDRED men that were with him, *faint, yet pursuing them.*" (v. 4.)

What three little words could be more blessedly descriptive of the Christian, than these?—not, ‘faint, and *sitting down*,’ not, ‘faint, and *giving up*,’—but, ‘faint, *yet pursuing*.’ We have to do with Him, who “giveth power to the faint” (Isa. xl. 29). “To them that have no might He increaseth strength.” It is a blessed use to make of our faintness and weariness, that of drawing out of the fulness of the supply of grace and strength in Christ. It is said, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;” but to whom? To the one who has no strength in himself, who would give up his course if strength were not supplied to him. One victory achieved, the conflict goes on afresh. Do we find ourselves fainting in spirit—still let us go on, for *our* God giveth strength to the weak. We like not this trial of faith. It is very painful, doubtless, to feel day after

day our own weakness. We want to feel that the battle is over ; but let us remember that now is our time of war. We are called on to fight “as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” and that in a daily round of conflicts. To-day there has been sufficient grace and sufficient evil, and to-morrow there will be sufficient grace and sufficient evil. What we need is to live day by day on God. He is faithful, and will supply strength according to the occasion and need. The Church will not be at rest, till the Lord comes. But weakness ought to be no hindrance to our going forward—“faint, yet pursuing.” It is a sad thing to be a spiritual sluggard, for a saint, like a door on its hinges, never to get off himself. The moment a person has learnt to renounce himself, he goes forward. Were felt weakness a reason for standing still, who so weak as Gideon ?

The next thing taught us in this history, is, that the world is neither able nor willing to supply refreshment to the man of faith. The world never *gives*, it may *concede* something to us, if we concede something to it, but it never gives. That which is required by it, is, generally, the sacrifice of faithfulness.

“ And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me : for they be faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian. And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna *now* in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army ? (v. 5, 6.)

If you profess to the world that you are “ following after ” resurrection glory, “ pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ” (Phil. iii),

you will not meet with anything at its hands but some such taunt as this.

“And Gideon said, Therefore, *when the Lord hath delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into mine hand*, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers. And he went up thence to Penuel, and spake unto them likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spake also unto the men of Penuel, saying, *When I come again in peace*, I will break down this tower.” (v. 7, 9.)

In the confidence of victory, Gideon was going forward (though consciously faint) and these princes of Succoth and the men of Penuel would not come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. To them it seemed a foolish thing to be fighting with THREE HUNDRED men against such enemies. So, we seem to be very

fools when we speak of certain glory. We must make up our minds to this. There are no resources to be had from the world, to help us on in the conflict in which we are engaged. 'You say you are kings and priests unto God, that you are to have glory' is the taunt of unbelief, 'but you cannot *shew* us anything for it, when we *see* you in the glory, we will believe.'

We have not one thing *to show*, not anything of which the natural man can take notice. Our wisdom is foolishness. We must go on feeling our weakness, confident of victory. By and bye the tables will be turned. The taunts and reproaches of the world will bring down judgment on their own heads. One special thing that the Lord is coming to judge, is, we are told, "all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 15). There is not

any present ridicule of His saints that will not be regarded as against Himself in that day.

“Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword.” (v. 10.)

“And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.” (v. 11, 12.)

“And Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of

him : and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof, even threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, *Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom ye did upbraid me*, saying, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thy men that are weary ? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.” (v. 13—17.)

“ Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor ? And they answered, As thou art, so were they ; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brethren, even the sons of my mother : as the Lord

liveth, if ye had saved them alive, I would not slay you. And he said unto Jether his first-born, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword : for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise thou, and fall upon us : for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks." (v. 18—21.)

"Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou and thy son, and thy son's son also ; for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you : *the Lord shall rule over you.*" (v. 22, 23.)

The Lord Jesus would not be made king by the people. (John vi. 15.) He came in His Father's name

(they would not receive Him thus) and He would not be received in His own name. It is a very different thing being received in our own names, from our being received in the name of the Lord. Gideon retires; he will not take the place of rule that belongs only to the Lord. He knows, that if the people's minds are fixed on *Gideon*, nothing but weakness and dishonour can result: but that, if *the Lord* be acknowledged and leaned on, there will be strength and blessing. Do we not find this principle running all through the New Testament?

Paul hides himself. Though having had such revelations from the Lord, though possessing such a compass of knowledge, yet, the moment he sees the spirit coming in of setting up *Paul*, he says, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as *the Lord* gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but

God gave the increase,"—so again, "Therefore let no man glory in *men*: for all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, &c." (1 Cor. iii.) Had he put himself forward, Christ would not have been seen. And this principle, true of Gideon, true of Paul, is true of every saint acting in faith.

One special mark of growth in grace is evidenced in our magnifying the name of the Lord Jesus, even though it be in the vilifying of our own names before the saints, and before the world, in our taking all blame to ourselves, and our giving all praise to the Lord. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Had the history of Gideon closed here, what a beautiful picture would it have presented.

There is none perfect, but the Lord. He is the true Gideon, the

true Sampson, the true David. At the close of the chapter, we see declension after revival—speedy declension, and that proceeding from Gideon himself.

“And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the ear-rings of his prey: (for they had golden ear-rings because they were Ishmelites”):—

He wanted some monument to signalize his victory. These ear-rings were the spoils of triumph confessedly from the Lord.

“And they answered. We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the ear-rings of his prey. And the weight of the golden ear-rings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold, besides ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that

were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah : and *all Israel went thither a whoring after it*, which thing became *a snare* unto Gideon, and to his house." (v. 24-27.)

Man seeks something whereby to *perpetuate* present blessing. This has ever been one way of his perverseness. 'What security have you that it will last?' he asks, and *faith* answers, 'None, whatever, but the presence of the Holy Ghost.' If we attempt to *secure* it by other means, like Gideon, we make an ephod. We seek to perpetuate blessing, to secure it to others, and, in a very short time, keep up the *form* (having lost the *power*), and worship that instead of God, just as Gideon's ephod had divine honours paid to it. What is it to have a set of principles (however scriptural) without the power of the Spirit? The only thing

to give perpetuity of blessing is the presence of the Holy Ghost. God has wrought in the way of revival, and men, whose hearts bounded with love to God and to their fellow men, have said, ‘Oh, we will *perpetuate* the blessing,’ and nothing but evil has come of it. We cannot secure the truth of God by arrangements of our own. Such arrangements may spring from a feeling of piety, but they evidence a want of *dependance* upon God. There was the energy of the Spirit working in Gideon, but he it was, who prepared the way for Israel’s re-apostacy.

The restoration lasted not longer than there was individual energy of faith.

“Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more: and the country was in quietness forty years *in the days of Gideon*. And

Jerubbaal, the son of Joash, went and dwelt in his own house And Gideon, the son of Joash, died in a good old age, and was buried in the sepulchre of Joash, his father, in Ophrah of the Abi-ezrites."

"And it came to pass, *as soon as Gideon was dead*, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side : neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel." (v. 28—35)

Of what use was the ephod now? It had entirely failed of effecting that, which, doubtless, Gideon designed it should effect. And have not the well designed efforts of men of God, who have sought to provide

for the pure truth, repeatedly ended in the same way? The great thing we have to look to, is, not the holding in prominence of this or that particular *doctrine*, but the ungrieved presence of the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that He is the *Holy* Spirit, repressive ever of the flesh. If I have set up something, that something becomes *an object* to me, instead of the Lord. His glory must be the prominent thing. How speedy was the departure of the Church from God at the first, even in Paul's days, "all sought their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." (Phil. ii. 21.)

THE CHURCH—WHAT IS IT? HER POWER, HOPES, CALLING, PRESENT POSITION, AND OCCUPATION.

“Scripture speaks of our *place*, our *privileges*,
our *responsibilities*.”

It is a solemn thing, when we come to think *what* the Church, really, *is*.^{*} It is all blessed, when we think of her privileges; but, looking at her as Christ's representative on earth, is most solemn—an “epistle of Christ.” As the tables of stone represented what God *demanded of man*, so should the Church, and in an equal sense, be, in the world, the revelation of what God *is to man*, an exhibition of God's grace and power to man and in man.

When I speak of the “*kingdom*,”

* Not, *ought to be*, but, *is*; she ought to be a faithful representative; but we cannot take the Church of God out of this place, let her have got into what condition she may.

about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) It is not the demand of a certain amount of human righteousness, or the removal of certain evils that hurt the conscience and offend society, it is the living display of what Christ is before men. We should never be content when we fail to display Christ before men ; as Christ is righteousness for me before God, so is He the example and standard of righteousness before men—as Christ is for me before God, so ought I to be for Christ before men. This is the way for the Christian to judge of right or wrong. We may be humbled because of failure, but we must not lower the standard.

MAN'S NATURAL THOUGHT ANSWERED.

MAT. xix. 16—26.

In the apparent dealings of the Lord Jesus, we sometimes find a degree of roughness (though, in spirit, always most blessed gentleness), and this, especially, when that which was amiable in human nature was brought before Him. Thus, when this young man came running to Him, and said, “Good Master, *what good thing shall I do*, that I may have eternal life?” Jesus gave the abrupt answer, “Why callest thou me good? there is none good but One, that is, God.” Again; when Nicodemus came to Him, by night, desiring to *learn* of Him, and professing to believe He came from God (John iii.), He answered, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

God." Again, when (Jesus having foretold His suffering many things at the hands of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, at Jerusalem, and being killed, and raised again the third day), Peter, in the amiable feelings of human nature, said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," (Mat. xvi.) He immediately replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is an abomination in the sight of God. The feelings of Peter only savoured of the things of men, therefore, Jesus could only receive it as that which was ministered by Satan—"Get thee behind me, Satan."

This young man counted on some competency in himself to do that which was good. He was very amiable, very loveable (it says, in

the mention made of this same incident in Mark, “ Jesus beholding him, *loved* him”) ; there is much that is naturally beautiful and lovely in human nature, but there is nothing in it that tends to *God*, there is no will to please *God* in it, no righteousness in it. If such a young man had come to us, asking such a question—“ What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life ?” we should have considered it a most hopeful sign ; but how did Jesus treat him ? He just showed him that he was entirely wrong in his estimate of himself ; “ But, if thou wilt *enter into life*,” he said, “ *keep the commandments*.” On his asking, “ Which ?” Jesus tests him by those which respect his conduct towards *man*—“ Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother ;

and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." "Well," says the young man, "all these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus does not deny it, but tests him further, and says, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me." "When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Jesus had now touched that, in which his *heart* was concerned, and proved him to be an *idolater* and *covetous*. His riches were the treasure on which his *heart* was set.

If we would do that which is good, we must have a new nature. There cannot be good *fruits*, unless the *tree* is good; and, if we would *do* that which is good, we must have a *good nature*. But Jesus declares, "There is *none* good but One, that

is God." That word, "Do, and live," was just brought in to prove that all are *lost*, to prove that none *can* do; and, therefore, it is folly to think of entering into life, thus. An *innocent* man would not have understood the meaning of the commandments. "*Thou shalt not lust*," is addressed to a sinner, who has the *inclination* to lust. "*Thou shalt not steal*," is addressed to a sinner, who has the *inclination* to steal. Jesus did not come to cultivate the good of human nature, but to *SAVE* the *bad* and the *lost*; therefore, He tells the Pharisees, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Mat. xxi. 31).

"There is *none* good," says Jesus of human nature (and this is his account of you, dear reader)—but, there is *ONE* good—GOD.

When summing up the sins of the Gentiles, the Apostle says, "God

gave them over to a reprobate mind." Why? Because "they did not *like* to retain *God* in their knowledge." (Rom. i. 28.) This was the root, and all the other sins were but the fruits. God does not ask for your goodness, He wants the *heart*, and this is what man does not like to give.

Paradise was God's being good to good people. The law, was God's being righteous to bad people. But what we want is, God *good* to *bad* people; and where shall we find this? In the Gospel. You may object, this is favouring the wicked; so it is, "Let favour be shewn to the wicked, &c." (Is. xxvi. 10). Jesus *came* to the *lost*, and this was "favour shewn to the wicked."

This is what Satan always tries to make us disbelieve, and what our proud hearts do not like to accredit. Satan said to Eve (in effect), "God wants to keep an apple from a man

who is innocent, He is afraid you will be gods, like Himself, knowing good and evil." But what has God done? He has given, not simply an apple to one who is innocent, but (wonderous love !) He has given *His Son* for *poor lost sinners*. Satan always tries to tell us lies about God. Nothing could shew forth the riches of His grace like this, that He has given His own Son for poor sinners. "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God is righteous and just,—in what? in requiring goodness from us? No! in condemning us? No! He is righteous and just in *forgiving* our sins, in estimating the worth of His own Son's work.

When we stand in the centre of God's love, encompassed by it, we find it immeasurable.

INTEGRITY.

THE world's integrity is, like every other thing belonging to fallen man, a mere hollow system of selfishness, though it may be polished over by the decorums and civilities of society. The source from which *true* integrity must spring, is love to God, and this love can only spring from an assurance that our guilt has been pardoned, and our sins have been washed away in the blood of Jesus.

Never act *above your faith*, nor *below your conscience*.

FAITH, AND ITS FOOTSTEPS.

HEBREWS xi.

It is impossible to deny that there is some principle livingly working in the world which has signally called out the hatred and opposition of man.

It has been so from Abel downwards, to the present day.

The "course of this world" has gone on. It is now going on around us. But, in the midst of this, there has been, and there is, a motive acting, which calls out the hostility and proud judgment of the world. That history is the history of the town in which we are, as well as of Cain and Abel. In every age and in every country it has been so. We find the people of *faith* the objects of the hatred of man. But God owns this

LEAD THOU ME ON.

Lead, Saviour, lead amid th' encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on ;

The night is dark, and I am far from home,

Lead thou me on.

Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see

The distant scene, one step's enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou

Shouldst lead me on ;

I loved to choose and see my path : but now

Lead Thou me on.

I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will—remember not past
years.

So long Thy power has kept me, sure it will

Still lead me on,

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till

The night is gone ;

And with the morn I shall Thee, Saviour,
see,

Whom I have loved, and who hast so loved
me.

EARTH'S DROUGHT, AND HEAVEN'S SPRINGS.

PSALM lxiil.

There are two ways in which we may think and speak of God :—

1st, as of *what He is in Himself* ;
2nd, as it regards *relation in which we stand to Him*.

I may say, He is a Holy God, and think how I might stand before Him. Just as I might speak of a man, as a kind man, an honest man, a just man, and the like, and think how I might get on with him. I might do this, or I might speak of that man, as *my friend*.

With the sinner, it is a question of how he can stand before God—not *his* God, (except, indeed, as Creator.) But, when I realise my soul to be in relation to God, through grace, I can think about *my* God,

“ My God,” says Paul, “ shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” I know Him. There are many most important things, as to our expectations, feelings, and conduct, which depend upon this.

It is not that the saint may not think of God, as it regards what He is in Himself. He does so, in the highest sense. He looks with a certain awe on the majesty and holiness of God. “ Blessed is the man that feareth always.” He may feel what it is to stand in the presence of God, as is said, all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we “ have to do.” (Heb. iv.) *Grace has made Him our God ; but still we have to do with Him, such as He is.*

In the sense in which we are now speaking, the sinner cannot say that God is *his* God. The saint may be exercised about His dealings. He

may see, in great exercise of heart, that He goes His own way, that He does not take counsel with us. He may have lost privileges, blessings, that which formed a link between himself and God, and of which God has now deprived him. God comes to Abraham, and tells him to sacrifice Isaac. (Gen. xxii.) It was a solemn requirement that demanded a sacrifice of His poor servant, quite out of the way of (in a certain sense, opposed to) the communicated channel of the promises. And it was naked faith in Abraham. (Heb. xi. 17-19.) But God comes to be known in a new manner, as a God that can raise the dead. Abraham has him for fresh strength and blessing. The heart may be sifted and exercised by such dealings ; but it is only to bring us into acquaintance with the resources God has in Himself.

See Ps. xlii. All apparent channels of blessing are dried up and

gone. “ When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me, &c.” But, “ Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? *Hope thou in God*; (it does not say in “ my” God;) for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.” God must take the place of everything, of the means, even, that He had given. It must be naked trust in God, and nothing else. Then he turns and says, “ O *my God*, (by faith his heart has got to confident leaning on Him, to whom he belongs,) my soul is cast down within me; therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar . . . I will say unto God *my rock*, Why hast thou forgotten me, &c. . . . Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of *my* countenance, and *my God*.” Settled

and firm in the confidence of the relation, it is “my” countenance, and “my” God.—“The day will come when *my* countenance will reflect what I have found God to be.”

The first thing for the sinner, is, to know this relation with God. The saint may be exercised on seeing God going His own way, breaking down all outward instrumentality of blessing; still God is not gone. The sinner has not anything of that. *He cannot praise God, as “his” God,* when he has blessing, nor *trust in God*, out of the blessing. Faith praises God when the blessing is there,—when deprived of it, God stands out more distinctly, and more fully, as the object of trust.

The Psalm we are considering begins, “O God, *thou art my God* early will I seek *thee* : My soul thirsteth for *thee*, my flesh longeth for *thee*.” We shall see on what this is founded.

Christ was in the world. But the world was, to Him, "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." It is not that there was little water, or that the water was, as the waters of Marah, bitter, to Him; there was *no* water. There was not one single thing to refresh. It was "a dry and thirsty land where no water is." His soul was longing altogether for God. Even His poor disciples* were "as brooks that deceive, as streams of brooks that pass away."

"O God, thou art my God, (He says,) early will I seek thee"—"I am longing after God—God, my God; and that, in the distinct, settled consciousness, that there is not anything to be looked for from the world.

Absence of sin, and communion

* He graciously owned all that grace had wrought in them, "Ye are they," he said, "which have continued with me in my temptations."

with the Father, necessarily made this world, to His soul, a "dry and thirsty land." Morally, there is not anything of God in it. "In me, that is in my flesh," writes the Apostle, "*is no good thing.*" (Rom. vii. 18.) And he adds further, "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" (Rom. viii. 7.) If we look a little at all that the carnal mind has reared up in this world, its joys and its pleasures, its actings, at that which is fair and lovely in it—where was it all found out? (Not that this, or that particular thing is evil, but *where* was it invented? and *why*?) Man had departed from God, and *he wished to be happy away from God.* It was in Cain's family. Cain "builded a city and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch." (Gen. iv.) He established his name in the earth. Then, if he has a city, he will not have a disagreeable city, a dis-

mal city, he invents harps and organs. Gone out by the judgment of God, vagabond, and a stranger, he builds himself a city; and he must embellish his city, and make it agreeable to live in, apart from God. This is the world. If the carnal mind is enmity against God, the world is incessantly employed in making itself happy without God.*

* I avail myself here of a rather copious extract :

“ The three master principles which animate ‘ the course ’ of it—‘ the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,’—are here (Gen. iii.) seen to become the springs of moral action in the heart of the woman, as soon as she listened to the devil. For the soul that gives up God, must find out other masters, and other resources. And this is the world. The world has no confidence in God, nothing to bind it to Him, nothing to give it rest in Him, no sense of His love and truth. Such has it been since this hour, when man gave ear to the accuser of God. It has therefore found out other objects. “ God made man upright, but he has found out many inventions.”

If He comes in, everything is spoiled. It may be objected, that this is not

Conscience, too, is quickened into being. Sin did this. "They knew that they were naked." And it was then, at the hour of its birth, as it is at this hour, an *uneasy* conscience that makes cowards of all who carry it. "I was afraid," says Adam, (unable to look at God,) "because I was naked." Conscience in man must be of this quality, for it owes its existence to sin. There was no sense of good and evil in him till he sinned, and this sense, thus acquired, must leave him a coward in the presence of the *righteous* One.

Instinctively they make themselves aprons. This is our doing still. Our common state of guilt makes us shun even our fellow-creatures. We cannot stand inspection even from them. One great and constant effort, in the scene around us every day, is to escape *full* notice. The apron is still invented. The social system understands and allows this. Indeed it is maintained by a common consent of this sort. And religion, in its way and measure, as well as the rules and common understanding of society, helps in all this. But "the presence of the Lord God" is a different element from that of the

the time for God to come in ;—but *how* is it, that you are finding your presence of our fellows. No rules which sustain the social system will make that tolerable for a moment. The clothing and the ceremony, the inventions of society, or the good manners that array and adorn it, will be found vanity. All have “come short of *His* glory.” Let but the conscience hear the tread of His foot, or the sound of His voice, in the garden, and no attempt will be equal to that moment. Even religious inventions will all be vain. They can give no confidence with God, nor turn the current of the heart. With his apron upon him, Adam hides himself among the trees of the garden.

This teaches holy and solemn lessons. But with all this cowardice, there is effrontery. “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree.” Man lays the mischief down at God’s door. He says in effect, “Let God see to it, for the woman is His creature and He gave her to me ;” as he still, in the spirit of his mind, says, “Let God see to it, for the world is His, and He made it.” A strange and horrible union ! The insolence of the heart charging God, and yet a coward con-

joys and your pleasures, when it is not the time for God to come in? That is the world. Let it be as fair, and as lovely, as you please, *it must be away from God.*

When Christ came from the bosom of the Father, that He should find such a world, to His soul, a “dry and thirsty land,” can be no matter of surprise. And what was the consequence? His heart went back. He could not go back to the place science unable to meet Him. The sinner may talk big and make a noise. He may reason upon God and his own condition, and frame speeches and arguments as well as aprons. But in spite of all that he has surrounded himself with, there he is, like Adam, ashamed of himself and afraid of God. Man has wronged the blessed God, and avoids Him. He charges Him and yet is afraid to look in His face while He does so. All this in spite of himself, witnesses against him. “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee,” the Lord has but to say. And then, as again in the parable. he must be speechless.”—*Enoch.*

from which He had come, until that was accomplished, for which He had come. But He says, “Early will I seek thee ; (diligence of heart ;) my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and thy glory *so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*”

It is this alone gives a right apprehension of the world, and works the power of separation from it. The soul that knows what it is to be in the sanctuary and see the power and the glory of God, cannot find a home in the world ; that soul must look up to God, as it has known Him *there*. True, the saint has not, as yet, (except in spirit, and by faith), been there ; but he has seen “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Cor. iv. 6.) “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Show us

the Father," the Lord told Philip, when down here in humiliation. And God, who commanded "the light to shine out of darkness, hath now shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." We have seen this glory, and have known the perfect, unhindered flow of affections that belong to it. The world is no place for this; it is all too selfish. There will be everything to minister to it in heaven. I can let my heart out there, and the heart I have to let out, will be a heart of holy affections, of which God is the centre.

And mark how *we* get this, the way in which *we* can speak of the soul being *athirst for God*.

How can we see God,—such as He is in the sanctuary (sinners as we are)? if I am desiring to be there, in the blessed presence of God, and if the world, with all its joys and plea-

sure, can give me no refreshment, how is it that I have this entire confidence in the blessedness of His presence? While Christ came and found it "a dry and thirsty land," there was, in Him, the outflowing of God's love to sinners. He did not ask us to go to Him, until He had first come to us. He does not say, "Come unto me," until He is in the condition, down here, in which the sinner can approach Him. He takes not the leprosy, but He puts His hand upon the leper. He places Himself in contact with the sinner only to give confidence in love and put away his sin. "Be thou clean," is what only Jehovah could say.

Nor is this all. His coming down here, was not His taking us up there. Having completed the atonement, He is gone back; and we now see "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Mark how this gives peace to the sinner. If I see the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, *who is this Jesus Christ*, in whom I see it ? It is the very One who has borne my sins. Had Christ come (instead of in humiliation) in glory, down here, it would have confounded and destroyed. But when I see the glory above, instead of this glory shining upon me in my sins, to confound and destroy me, it is the settled proof, that my sins are all gone. In the marvellous mystery of God's love, His glory itself (confounding in judgment) asserts my deliverance. And more, it is not a cold, dry proof,—love unsearchable is there, that which angels desire to look into. God's Son has been made a man down here, and to what a depth has He come—this Son of God—down to the dust of death ! but He is up there now ; and He has carried me up there. What love is told out in that humbled man ! what love in that glorified man !

If everything of tenderest affections is brought out by Christ's coming down here ; if He says, (speaking to the Father about those given Him out of the world,) " That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me," (John xvii. 23,) this is the love wherewith I am loved. I am up there, not only in the confidence of righteousness, but in the confidence of love.

Thus it is, I can speak of seeing the glory of God *so* as I *have seen* it in the sanctuary. No man can long to see it, until he has seen it. As a sinner, he could not have such a desire. To the vilest sinner in the world, I can speak of the love of God coming down to sinners in their need, but not of his seeing the glory of God, so as he *has seen* it in the sanctuary. He who cannot spend an hour's time in singing the praises of God with His people here, how could

he spend an eternity in the presence of God? *He dare not stand there in his conscience, and he would not like it in his affections.*

It is thus the poor sinner is brought into this condition. He longs to see that which he has seen. The desire is founded on salvation.

So too, as to practical holiness—conformity to the image of Christ. When the Spirit of God is working the sinner may desire to be saved; but this conformity is grounded on salvation. “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” (John xvii. 19.) The Holy Ghost, giving us to behold the glory of the Lord, changes us into the same image, from glory to glory. (2 Cor. iii. 18.) It is the reflection of what Christ is above, because of our having the Holy Ghost to see it. (Acts vii.) What would the world be to such an

one? at home in heaven, could I come down, and find Satan's inventions refresh me? "The God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." It is the tinsel, wherewith they cheat the savage. For the tinsel and beads of Satan, they are giving up all that is truly valuable.

And see where the heart rests. "Because *thy* loving kindness," it says, "is better than life, my lips shall praise thee." The Apostle speaks of always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in his mortal flesh. So again, he "had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God that raiseth the dead." (2 Cor. i. 9.) So Hezekiah, after chattering like a

swallow, and mourning like a dove, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of the spirit." (Is. xxxviii.) Paul was imprisoned, beaten with stripes, and the like, he was pressed out of measure, above strength, so that he despaired even of life, but he was trusting in God, and his consolation abounded by Christ. These things were not joyous in themselves, but grievous : but, with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, (Dan. iii. 16-18,) he was "careful for nothing," because God was caring for him."

This is practically the Christian life ; not the "finding the life of the hand," as Isaiah expresses it ; but a dying daily and blessing God.

And mark the result. "My soul shall be satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." In sorrow, in trial, in the midst of

everything, the soul is *satisfied*. And that is never the case, except where it is satisfied with God. For this the affections must be perfectly settled. Are you, dear reader, satisfied with God? or are you turning to something the flesh craves, that is not God? “Rejoice in the Lord *always*”—one in prison said that; but he had *learned* in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content; and it was in that very condition, that he said, “*My God* shall supply all your need.” “I will bless the Lord at *all times*” is the language of Psalm xxxiv, and what had the world been found? “This poor man cried, and the Lord saved him out of all his troubles.” “I will bless the Lord at all times,” even, in trial and seeming desertion.

In the darkness of night, separated from friends, when the soul is thrown back upon itself, He it is that engages the thoughts.—“When I re-

member thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night-watches." Let me be deprived of everything, all that could buoy me up and support me, I am meditating on thee. It is just the whole of life. How is it with ourselves ? our last thought, that which leaves us on the pillow, and the first, with which we wake in the morning, is it of God ?

There is another thing, "Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." We often hear it said, 'God has been with me, and supported me all my life long,' where the thought and desire is mainly that of making God a God of providence. But what is the practical consequence, as found here ? diligence of heart.—"My soul *followeth hard after thee.*" So with Paul, "Not that I have already attained, 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." (Phil. iii. 12-14.) Can we say, ' We are following hard after thee ?' How many are there, (real Christians,) the whole bearing of whose life and associations, the sum of whose Christianity, is not trust and faith in, and the soul's following hard after God !

In conclusion. To us, the whole matter is founded on this, that He who was our Sin-bearer is now in the glory, and there for us—our Head. Therefore, though ourselves in trial and sorrow, in a " dry and thirsty land where no water is," (and the more we see of it, the more we shall

find it to be “a dry and thirsty land,”) we “joy in God.”—“All my springs are in Thee.”

This world is a wilderness wide !

I have nothing to seek, or to choose ;
 I 've no thought in the waste to abide ;
 I 've nought to regret, nor to lose.

The Lord is Himself gone before,
 He has mark'd out the path that I tread,
 It 's as sure, as the love I adore,
 I have nothing to fear, nor to dread.

There is but that one, in the waste, [own,
 Which His footsteps have marked as His
 And I follow in diligent haste,
 To the seats, where He's put on His crown.

For the path where my Shepherd is gone,
 Has led up to His Father and God,
 To the place where He's now on the throne,
 And His strength shall be mine on the road.

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And with Him shall my rest be on high,
When in holiness bright I sit down,
In the joy of His love ever nigh,
In the peace that His presence shall crown.

'T is the treasure I've found in His love
That has made me a pilgrim below,
And 't is there, when I reach Him above,
As I'm known, all His fulness I'll know.

And, Saviour, 't is Thee, from on high,
I await, till the time Thou shalt come,
To take him, Thou hast led by Thine eye,
To Thyself, in Thy heavenly home.

Till then, 't is the path Thou hast trod,
My delight and my comfort shall be ;
I'm content with Thy staff and Thy rod,
Till with Thee all Thy glory I see.

DEAD WITH CHRIST, RISEN WITH CHRIST.

COL. ii. 20 ; iii. 1.

The Christian's risen life is exhibited in two things—death unto that which is here, and heavenly-mindedness. “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ,” writes the Apostle, “from the rudiments of the world, why, *as though living in the world*, are ye subject to ordinances.” The expression “rudiments of the world,” goes a vast way. I am to be dead, not only to sin, but to all the religiousness of human nature. A Jew had this religiousness, and it was cultivated of God ; but it brought not forth good fruit, it produced nothing but “wild grapes.” Now, if we do not see that we are risen, we shall be cultivating human nature, for God. He Himself has tried this already ; and He says, that not anything could have been done

nity, is our power of entering with the affections into the things of God. "The Father loveth the Son"—what a place this puts me in, to be thus cognisant of the Father's feelings towards His beloved Son.

In our proper place, we get our mind filled and associated with things, that leave this world as a little thing—an atom, in the vastness of the glory, which was before the world was,

"No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning, to sing its sweet song, with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air.—O my brother, set it before your mind's eye, as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfilment."

GOD'S END, AND JACOB'S MEANS.

GENESIS XXXV.

In chapter xiii. we find Abraham raising an altar, when separated from Lot, and in the land. There God appears to him, but not now, as at the first, to bring him into the path of faith; he is in the path of faith and brought into the place of promise, and He gives him a clearer knowledge of the extent of the promise—"Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. . . . Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee." Here is a great principle as to separation from the world.

We will now consider another altar—that raised by Jacob, on his recall to Beth-el, and a little compare this with God's wrestling with him, when he came out of Padan-aram. *There was no altar there.*

The history of Jacob is the history of one in the favour of God, but disciplined in a failing walk, and through failure, the faithfulness of God being evidenced throughout all his failures and wanderings in his attempts to bring about the blessing in a carnal way. Just the result of this is seen in his interview with Pharaoh. (Chap. xlvii.) He goes into the presence of the great potentate of the world, and, without any hesitation, blesses him, whilst at the same time giving a very sorrowful history of his own life. There is most evident superiority in the presence of the world ; but, putting himself in comparison with other saints, his own life has been a sad one—*few and evil* his

days. The moment a saint is put in contrast with the highest potentate in the world, he is the superior. It is very lovely to see this lowliness, the result of his "few and evil" days. The saint may have to confess before the world, to his own shame, yet there cannot but be, where the soul is in communion with God, the consciousness of blessing.

As to Jacob's character, he was most assuredly a believer, and, what is more, a believer who valued God's promises. Esau was not. (Scripture speaks of him as a "profane person.") Jacob valued the promises,—Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. But we do not find in Jacob *this* character of faith—confidence in God to bring about the promises. Therefore, whilst he values the promises, he uses fleshly means to obtain them; he reckons upon human policy, instead of reckoning upon God. There is blessing in the

end ; but God could not approve his conduct ; and, (in the dealing of God's government with him,) with the measure with which he has meted, it is measured to him again ; he is himself continually the object of similar deceit. He tells Laban, "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night : and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house : I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle ; and thou hast *changed my wages ten times.*" (Chap. xxxi.) Cheated about his wife, wronged as to his wages, a wanderer from his father's house, and slave to Laban, through acting in a deceitful way, instead of leaving the accomplishment of the blessing to God : in all this we discern actual discipline because of evil.

When once fairly under the rod of discipline, God chastens him, makes

him feel the rod, but supports him under it. And it is thus always with "the Father of spirits." He chastens, He disciplines; but the moment He has put the soul under discipline, it is, as with Ephraim, "since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still." When lying down at night, with the stones of the place for his pillow, Jacob dreams—"and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed, and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, *I am with*

thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for *I will not leave thee*, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Chap. xxviii.)

He was always using deceitful, human means to gain his ends, as in regard to the birthright and the blessing, so too with respect to Laban's flock. (Chap. xxx.)

After a certain time, he finds he cannot remain with Laban, and, bidden of God to return to the land of his kindred, he steals away. Laban pursues; but God intervenes, and (if he would) he cannot do him hurt. Jacob sets up a pillar of witness. (Chap. xxxi.)

When he fled from the face of Esau at the first, he saw a vision of angels, and was declared to be the object of God's favour. So here, it is the same thing. At Beth-el, he had set up his pillows for a pillar of

memorial, and poured oil upon the top of it, and vowed a vow. Yet it is after that, he goes through all this discipline.

No longer able to stay with Laban, the Lord appears to him again, and, in bidding him return to the land of his fathers, tells him, "*I will be with thee.*" Further, the angels of God meet him on his way, and he names the place where he has seen them, "Mahanaim," *i.e.*, "two hosts." (Chap. xxxii.)

But Esau is about to meet him ; and still there is the same character of unbelief. In place of remembering God's word, "I will be with thee," and the fact of God's host having met him, he has recourse afresh to fleshly expedients, in order to "find grace in the eyes of," and to "appease" "my lord Esau." To faith, had there been four thousand men with Esau, instead of four hundred, what of that!—"If God be for

us, who can be against us?" Besides, what right or title had Esau? But we put ourselves under the men of the world, when we use worldly, deceitful ways in our dealings with them.

Still, the Lord meets him in mercy.

He sends over band after band of substance and servants, then children and wives first, and remains himself behind. "And Jacob was left alone." Sad picture of a person not walking with God! Rescued from the pursuit of Laban, encouraged by the promise of God to be with him, and by the sight of God's host at Mahanaim, all this had not put courage in him; and why? his heart was not with God. There was this fleshly principle, and God must take the matter into His own hands. If He rescues Jacob from Esau, He must have to do with Jacob *Himself*.

Jacob had vowed, "If God will be

with me and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come to my father's house in peace ; then shall the Lord be my God," and now he says, " O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee : I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all thy truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant ; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan : and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of Esau ; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Still, he does not know how to trust God.

You see a person loving the Lord, valuing His promises, a saint of God, chastened continually, and yet the flesh not broken down: God must bring him to the point of wrestling with him Himself. See Peter. The Lord could say to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;" — again, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you;" — and again (when washing Peter's feet) "Ye are clean, but not all, for He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean." Yet, as it regards Peter, where was he? really loving the Lord, but not having the least thought of what the flesh was; and he is therefore put through sifting—"Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art

converted strengthen thy brethren," (Luke xxii. 31-32.) But he is sustained through the sifting—"I have prayed for thee."

Here the Lord meets Jacob *alone*. "There wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day,"—this is not Jacob's wrestling with God in faith (as it is often said)—"and when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him." It is a wrestling in which all the strength of Jacob is put forth; and in the sequel, while he feels what it is to have his heart broken and his flesh withered, it can be said to him, "as a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed." He gets a blessing: God calls him "Israel." Yet God refuses to reveal His name. Is He to reveal His name as a wrestler—a position into which He has been forced, so to speak, by

Jacob? "Wherefore is it," He says, "that thou dost ask after my name? and he blessed him there." There is no peaceful, quiet knowledge of God's marvellous grace. He is God's strong man, through the wrestling; but God must weaken the flesh. And he will pass the soul, where the flesh is not broken, sooner or later, through this discipline.

It was a blessing to get such a name as "Israel"—most marvellous grace, and get a blessing that came to a *halting* saint; he halted all the days of his life; and God refused to reveal His name. Not so in the case of Abraham—"I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect," He says to Abraham. "And he left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham." Here we find peaceful communion; and Abraham can intercede for others, instead of wrestling for himself. (Chaps. xvii., xviii.)

After this it is, we find God saying to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." (v. 1.) Here He begins, if one may so speak, to volunteer; and He passes over what we have been considering, as if nothing had happened. 'You had to flee (He says,) from the face of Esau, I promised you blessing; get back to this place, and there raise an altar.'

"Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise and go up to Beth-el: and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and *who was with me in the way which I went.*" (vv. 2, 3.) Rachel had carried her father's strange gods

along with her. (Chapter xxxi. 19, 30-35.) Jacob remembers this now, though he had paid no attention to it before. Into what a mixed state had he got! One never knows how far we may go when we do not trust in God. But there is now the discerning of clean and unclean. That which results, after all the discipline, is the consciousness of the love and faithfulness that had followed him all the way which he went. "And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand," &c. (*vv.* 4, 5.)

Here he is, after all the discipline, after all the trial, worshipping God, as the faithful God who had answered him in the day of his distress, and had been with him in the way he had gone. The moment God had put him under the discipline, He said, "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest." And Jacob says, "He *has* been with

me: Yes, he is the God that, while *we have failed in the way, has been with us all the way.*"

"And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, *Thy name is Jacob; thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name; and He called his name Israel.*" (vv. 9-10.) This is a great while after the wrestling. Jacob has got rid of all his strange gods, and he is meeting God where God can reveal Himself, and give him the new name of "Israel." He does it now as if He had never done it before. 'I know nothing,' He says, 'of the supplanter, you are now strong with God.'

"And God said unto him, *I am God Almighty*: be fruitful and multiply: a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land

which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee, will I give the land. *And God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.*" (vv. 11-13.) That is just what He had done with Abraham. He is not making him halt, not wrestling with him now. Nor does he hide His name now. 'That is the name,' He says, 'in which I can reveal myself in all peaceful confidence.' And He goes up from him.

Jacob has his "Beth-el." God had spoken to him from the top of the ladder, but now he comes down. "And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place *where God spake with him Beth-el.*" (vv. 14, 15.) It is not a half-fearing, half-worshipping, "How dreadful is this place," &c.

He had been a "supplanter," his name, as a man, was "Jacob;" but God will not give it him. "Israel" is God's name for him. He had taken advantage of his brother Esau, a rash, unbelieving man—not at all a lovely act; but the history gives the reason; he valued his father's blessing, (prophetic blessing,) yet he listened to his mother's advice; he hearkened to her, and went and feigned to be Esau. Now that was not trusting God. He who made Isaac bless him and say, "I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed;" He who made Jacob bless the sons of Joseph, "crossing his hands," (chap. xlviii.) was perfectly able to accomplish that which he had spoken. He has revealed Himself as "God *Almighty*," and Jacob is able to name the place, "the house of God."

What results to us in instruction from all this, is, that the Lord is

dealing with us—not merely giving blessing in the land of Canaan, nor yet the joy consequent on that, (that which he did to Abraham, when separated from Lot,) there is another thing, as it regards the way, our individual conduct, and individual character, namely, that thus the Lord deals with us, to chasten and break down the flesh, in order that He may manifest himself in peaceful communion. When we are able to look at, and weigh things, as that we have had to do with God about them, in the knowledge that He was dealing with us in His faithful love, it is done in settled peace; but every idol is put away. We may, like Peter, have real love for the Lord, and be sincere, or, like Jacob, really value the promises; but, where the flesh is not judged, there must be this breaking of it down. Sometimes, it may be at the very starting, sometimes, on a death-bed, sometimes,

through circumstances in the way ; but, sooner or later, the flesh must be judged, whether it is judged quietly, or judged painfully. In Jacob, we see confidence in the flesh, a leaning on the flesh for the attainment of God's promises, and, in the way, all sorts of discipline, though there is blessing at the end. There may be a trusting the faithfulness of God about the promises—faith in the promises, joy in the promises, and yet, in place of leaning upon the power of God for their accomplishment, a use of unholy means which entail chastisement and sorrow : “Be not deceived,” says the Apostle, “God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap ; he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.” (Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

“I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest.” Jacob had this at the very outset ; he had faith as to the end, and yet

he could not count on God for the way. God's sufficiency and the good-for-nothingness of the flesh must be learned *peacefully*, if walking with God, *painfully*, if we walk our twenty-one years in a carnal way. Jacob could not be at Beth-el in peace, until he had learned this lesson of "no confidence in the flesh." And he never had forced home upon his conscience until then the fact of his having false gods in his company (not that he loved idols). But there we see most peaceful, most happy self-judgment before God. *The means God uses are very various; but the thing must be done.* He cannot be at Beth-el with His child, until He has emptied him of confidence in the flesh.

The Lord give us to trust Him, not only for the end, but also for the way.

GOD IN EVERY THING.

NOTHING so helps the Christian to endure the trials of his path, as the habit of seeing God in every thing. There is no circumstance, be it ever so trivial, or ever so commonplace, which may not be regarded as a messenger from God, if only the ear be circumcised to hear, and the mind spiritual to understand, the message. If we lose sight of this valuable truth, life, in many instances at least, will be but a dull monotony, presenting nothing beyond the most ordinary circumstances of everyday life. On the other hand, if we could but remember, as we start each day on our course, that the hand of our Father can be traced in every scene—if we could see in the smallest, as well as in the most weighty circumstances, traces of the divine presence, how full of deep

will tempt him to think that, at least, the common-place circumstances of every day life exhibit nothing extraordinary, but only such as happen to other men. But we must not yield to him in this. We must start on our course every morning with this truth vividly impressed on our mind, *God is in every thing*. The sun that rolls along the heavens in splendid brilliancy, and the worm that crawls along the path, have both alike been prepared of God, and, moreover, could both alike, co-operate in the development of His unsearchable designs.

I would just observe, in conclusion, that the only one who walked in the abiding remembrance of the above precious and important truth was our Blessed Master. He saw the Father's hand, and heard the Father's voice in every thing. This appears pre-eminently in the season of the deepest sorrow. He came forth from

the garden of Gethsemane with those memorable words "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" thus recognizing, in the fullest manner, that GOD IS IN EVERY THING.

"I have seemed to see a need of every thing God gives me, and want nothing that He denies me. There is no dispensation, though afflictive, but, either in it, or after it, the Comforter teaches me that I could not have done without it. Whether it be taken from me, or given to me, sooner or later, God quiets me in Himself without it."

"I think the Lord deals kindly with me to make me believe *for* my mercies before I have them. The less *reason* has to work on, the more freely

faith casts itself on the faithfulness of God. I find that while faith is steady, nothing can disquiet me ; and when faith totters, nothing can establish me. If I tumble out amongst means and creatures, I am presently lost, and can come to no end ; but if I receive help from above, to stay myself on God, and leave Him to work in His own way and time, I am at rest, and can sit down and sleep in a promise, when a thousand rise up against me : therefore my way is not to cast beforehand, but to work with God by the day. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

“Self-contrivances are the effects of unbelief.”

PAUL'S VOYAGE.

ACTS xxvii.

It is very comforting to consider the nature of our title to the Scriptures. It is something far beyond clearness and certainty. It is, I may say, perfect and wonderful. From Genesis to Malachi, the Spirit of God was surveying a period of nearly four thousand years. He had therefore materials for hundreds of volumes, had He pleased to use them. But He has not done so. Nay, His method, generally, would appear to be strange. For He passes by what might be thought to have been the weightier matter of the history, and gives some small domestic scene, and that too in much detail at times.

And why is this? Why within the compass of a verse or two will He, as He does, contract the record

of nations for centuries, and spend chapters on the family occurrences of a few years?

He tells us—blessed be God !
“ They are written for *our admonition*.” And again—“ whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for *our learning*. And again—“ All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is *profitable*.”

These passages tell us by what rule the Holy Ghost conducted His divine labour in the Scriptures, and why it was He adopted this peculiar method. *He was consulting for us*. In all fidelity as to facts, I need not say, but still consulting for poor sinners, whom He, in riches of God's grace, purposed should be the pupils of His book, and the disciples in His school. In the mind of the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost was serving the elect in this work. For all the divine economy and operations are animate with love to sinners.

That principle is the life or breath of every part. And the histories of men good or bad, of family scenes, and national revolutions, all are preserved and recorded by the Spirit with respect to our comfort and admonition.

Thus we get, as I said, nothing less than a *wondrous* title to the divine word. Let us be reading what part of it we may, still have we title to say, "This was written for me, my good was consulted in this."

May I not, therefore, say, Is not this a wondrous and a perfect right the Lord gives me to His scriptures? He wrote them for us.

And so I might take occasion to say of the gifts of the Spirit. They were measured out into different vessels under the same prescription, that the profit of the saints might be advanced. (See 1 Cor. xii, 7, xiv. 1-3. 19.) The manifestation of the Spirit was given to profit withal, imparted

under consultations of our edification and blessing. Just as the Scriptures were inspired and delivered with this same intent likewise. Our profit was the rule by which the Holy Ghost wrought, when He wrote the standard volume, and when He filled the living vessels with His manifestations.

What higher title then, I ask again, can we want, than such as this ? and what higher could we get, if we wanted it ? This is a wondrous title ; and a perfect right we have to the full use and enjoyment of these precious, unspeakably, immeasurably precious fruits of the breathing of the Holy Ghost.

The same method is observed, the same rule and purpose guides and decides all that is made known to us in the writings of the New Testament as well as the Old. *We* are still consulted. There were materials, such as the world could not have

contained the books that would have recorded them. But they are not given, but—"these things are written," says one passage, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." Again we may say, beloved, Blessed be God !

The chapter we now propose to look at for a little (Acts xxvii,) illustrates what I have been saying. It is a very long chapter, but occupies itself about a matter which, in human calculation, we might have said and thought, could have well afforded to give place to other things in Paul's testimony. But "wisdom is justified." The ways and methods of wisdom, as well as her judgments and councils, are all "justified of her children."

This chapter, together with a part of the following one, gives us an account of the Apostle's voyage from Syria to

Italy, and his short journey onward from the sea-shore to Rome. The simple fact that great space is given to this in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, alone, might lead us to judge that the Spirit has a mind or purpose in it, beyond the merely acquainting of us with a fact ; and so we shall find it.

It is true, that the whole chapter is morally valuable, in this sense, that it gives us a strong view and impression of Christianity being to be found in all the ordinary circumstances and casualties of life—that the palpable, tangible world, in which we find our present life and exercise, is the very scene, in which the Spirit had His witnesses.

But we may expect to find in this chapter even more than these things—more than, either one fact in Paul's history, or this moral instruction, to which I have referred. There is, if I err not, a mystery in it.

The crew and company had been removed from the ship, in which they had sailed from the coast of Syria into another that was bound direct for Italy. (v. 6.) But shortly after, dangers began to threaten, and Paul gets an intimation, that the voyage would be with damage and hazard. (v. 10.)

This, he had, I judge, by the Spirit. He does not gather it from circumstances around, but from suggestions within. He was in communion, and learnt God's mind there, and not in the winds and waves. It was only the authority of the Holy Ghost that could have warranted a stranger, a landsman, a prisoner, too, to speak on such a subject with authority, opposing the judgment of "the owner," and "the master," and "the more part." The rest, on the contrary, were directed by providence, so called. The south wind blew softly, and they supposed that they

had obtained their purpose. (*v.* 13.) And so they sailed on. But a Euroclydon quickly followed the soft southern breeze, unexpected by those who looked around, but confirming the witness of him, who learned his lesson from the Spirit. (*v.* 14.)

But the Euroclydon seems only to drive the Apostle into his harbour more closely. He seeks deeper communion with God; and there learns deeper lessons, and comes forth laden with the glorious harvest that his soul had gathered. (*v.* 21.) He rebukes them for not having heeded his former word—but, in the abounding grace of Him, whom he served, and for whom he now witnessed, he pledges the safety of all who sailed with him in the wreck of the ship. (*v.* 22—26.)

The prisoner is, thus, the saviour. He who was on his way to appear before the power of this world, and in chains, is the vessel for bearing

the truth, the grace, and the power of Him, that is above the world. This is the great mystery of God. This is after the pattern of the Crucified One, being the life of the world. This is weakness made strong. This is praise perfected in the mouth of babes and sucklings. This is the mystery of God's salvation in a world that has destroyed itself. Paul the *prisoner* is the *saviour*. The lives of all are given to him, who was in chains. The most despised one, is the only one whom the Lord of life, and light, and glory owns. And such an one gets *all* God's secrets. "Howbeit," says he, "we must be cast upon a certain island." He knew the detail, as well as the mere fact of safety. And he believed, in spite of all appearances; and, with confidence, pledged the truth of the divine promise and grace.

Here, indeed, was God and His saint. Here, indeed, was a sample

of the divine mystery. Paul, after this, allows much to be *done* in the vessel. There was a sounding, a casting of anchors out from the stern, and a lightening the ship. (v. 28—29.) And he gives great encouragement and cheer of heart. (v. 33—38.) —But he will have nothing to be *trusted* but the promise. (v. 31.) If the boat be resorted to, confidence is at once placed in other resources, in provisions of safety independent of God, and then the promise will be rejected, and death must follow. The waters will swallow all who are not in the ark of the promise. But according to the same promise, the ship goes to pieces. It is worth nothing, never to be used again. But the lives are spared. Not a hair of the head of any perishes. Some swim, some float on planks, but *all* get their life, according to the promise that they, who were in company with Rome's prisoner, but God's witness and trea-

surer, should be safe. “And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.”

And in all this, farther notices of the divine mystery show themselves. There is a voice in it all, which may be heard. We have already noticed the prisoner as the saviour—the despised, and bound one, in the scene, being the only vessel of all the true glory and blessing that was there. How sensibly, how visibly, how audibly, all that meets the eye, and the ear, and the heart of him, that is taught of God. It needs no interpreter. It is full of God's way, as I have already observed. But here we have even more than that. The vessel goes to pieces. The lives of all are preserved. But it was not the vessel, but the promise that preserved the travellers. They had been committed to the ship; but the ship breaks asunder, and the promise is their ark in the waters

again. All stewardships fail, and prove unfaithful. The church, as the witness or candlestick, is broken, and removed ; but that which is of God Himself—His truth, His love, His promise, survives, as fresh and perfect as ever ; and none, who trust in Him, and in Him alone, shall ever be confounded. The voyage may end in complete wreck.—The dispensation may end in apostacy ; but all who hang on the promise, all who trust the word of man's Prisoner, God's Messenger, survive. Some swim, others float on planks. Some may be strong, and work their way more in the solitary strength of the Spirit—others, weaker, may hang about fragments that float around on the surface, here and there, inviting the timid and the unskilled ; but, whether they swim, or rest on the planks, all, strong and weak, together, reach the shore—they cannot perish, for the God of the promise has them

in His hand, and no wind or wave can dash them thence.

Is there not then, I ask, a parable or mystery in all this? This is not Paul's voyage only, but our's. It is the safety of wrecked mariners, the safety of all believers who trust in the promise, the God of the promise, the covenant sealed and made sure, the purchased, as well as promised, blessing and security of a poor ruined, helpless, and tossed soul, who has, by faith, found his way, and taken refuge in the sanctuary of peace, though all props and stays here fail him. Cisterns may be broken, but the fountain is as fresh and full as ever. Chorazin and Bethsaida may disappoint Jesus, but the Father does not. Hymenæus and Philetus may disappoint Paul, but God's foundations do not. "All men forsook me," says he on a great occasion, "but the Lord stood by me." And the Psalmist, in triumph, exclaims, "if the foundations be

destroyed, what shall the righteous do ? The Lord is in His holy temple ! Yes—the way to magnify our security, is to see it in the midst of perils and alarms. The very depth of the waters around honoured the strength and sufficiency of the ark to Noah—the ruthlessness of the sword, in passing through Egypt, glorified the blood that was sheltering the first-born of Israel—and the solemn terrors of the coming day of the Lord will but enhance the safety and the joy of the ransomed, whether with Jesus in the heavens, or as the remnant in their “chambers” in the land.

ANCHORAGE WITHIN THE VEIL.

HEB. vi.

THE Apostle had spoken, at the close of the preceding chapter, of “the first principles of the oracles of God,” and here, again, he says, “Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, *let us go on unto perfection* : not laying *again* the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.” (v. 1—3.)

We must remember to whom he was writing—persons, who, though now professing to be, and, as he says (v. 9), really, christians, were those, who had been familiar with the doctrines of the law, before they were

christians at all,—who had heard about Messiah, expected Messiah, (another word for Christ,) and had had their thoughts, therefore, connected with Christ, before the Holy Ghost was *sent down from heaven*. But it was quite a different thing to have certain elements about Christ, and to have “the Holy Ghost *sent down from heaven*,”* after Jesus was glorified.

The apostle alludes here to things, all of which were connected with the first principles of there being a Christ. A Pharisee held them, though not a believer at all ; he believed there would be a resurrection of the dead, &c. The great mass of christians stop here. But the apostle says, it is useless to rest here ; he would have them *go on unto perfection*. What he calls “perfection,” is not con-

* “The Ho’y Ghost sent down from heaven,” is not being “born again,” though we are born again by the Holy Ghost.

nected with practice or conduct, (except, indeed, as truth sanctifies,) it was the going on to a full revelation of what was in Christ ; it refers entirely to doctrine.

In the next place, he gives a reason why they should go on unto perfection. If they were firm in these truths, it was useless to begin them over again ; if they had given them up, it was “ impossible to renew them again unto repentance.”

All that belonged to the Jewish system, belonged to the *old* world ; when Christ comes again, it will be a *new* world. (Chap. ii. 5.) It is in that sense, he speaks of “ the powers (the same word as “miracles”) of the world to come.” The power of Christ will entirely deliver from the dominion of Satan, and these miracles were samples of that. A Jew, who had rejected Christ in humiliation, might be converted, and own a glorified Christ (unto whom these

powers of the world to come bore testimony). There was a glorified Jesus to be presented to those who had rejected Jesus when here. "But then," he says, "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame,"—if they reject these "powers" of the Holy Ghost, consequent upon the glorification of the Messiah,—if they have seen and felt "the powers" of "the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven," from Jesus glorified, and then turn away, there is no *other* doctrine to be preached, there is no restoring them again unto repentance.

He is considering the case of Hebrews turning back from the profession of Christianity to Judaism—that to which there was (save for faith) every inducement. They had no longer a visible Messiah, or temple, or sacrifices, or altar,—they had given up all these, and (there was joy, no doubt, in believing) they had nothing tangible in their stead. Confirmatory of the gospel, there were these powers of “the Holy Ghost come down,” but there was no Christ, in a third condition, yet to be presented. As a nation, they had crucified Him once ;—‘ now, (he says) that He is glorified, and that there have been these proofs brought in, are you going to crucify Him again?’

There was no third condition. “The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth

blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned ;”—all the rain that could come from heaven was spent upon this ground, and it remained just as it was, it brought forth thorns and briars.

Being “ partakers of the Holy Ghost,” is not being *converted*, but just what Simon Magus hoped to obtain. (Acts viii, 18-19.) With him it was no question of *conversion* ; he wanted to buy this preternaturally exercised power. Saul was “ amongst the prophets.” (1 Sam. x, 10-11.) He was made a partaker (not in a New, but in an Old, Testament sense) of the Holy Ghost. So Balaam, a thoroughly ungodly man. The Lord “ met him,” and “ put a word into his mouth.” (Numbers xxiii.)

I cannot turn back to these old elements, says the apostle, I desire

to lead you on ; but, if you have rejected them, “ it is impossible, &c.”

And then he adds, although having put before them this terrible picture, “ But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things *that accompany salvation*, though we thus speak.” (v. 9.)

There is one expression, (perhaps the most difficult of the whole,) which it may be well to notice, in passing, that of “ tasting the good word of God.” It looks like something real. But it is just what we have in the parable—a man’s “ anon with joy receiving it,” yet his having “ no root in himself.” (Matt. xiii, 20-21.) A person may have his feelings moved, (like the women who followed Christ, weeping, and wailing, and to whom, He said, “ Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children,”)—the heart may

be acted upon by certain truths, just as much as the head, and there be no work of God in the conscience. Neither the natural heart, or head, have anything to do with it ; there may be as much feeling as knowledge, and nothing of God at all.

The things to which the apostle refers, as seen in these believers, were not “ the powers of the world to come,” but real fruit, meet for Him by whom the earth was dressed. —“ God is not unrighteous,” he says, “ to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister ;”—I do not expect *you* to fall away,—“ and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” There was the proof of life, and that which God would not disown, (He never owned merely head and heart ; it would be a sort

of hopeless anomaly, to say, I own these fruits, and yet, disown the persons who bore them;) and he further desires for them full, undivided confidence, in the Lord, and about themselves.

There are three things spoken of in Scripture ;—1st, “ *Full assurance of Faith*,” (Heb. x, 22) ;—2dly, “ *Full assurance of Hope*,” (v. 11) ;—3dly, “ *Full assurance of Understanding*,” (Col. ii, 2). The “ full assurance of faith ” *rests on the testimony of God* ; God tells me, the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and I rest up that testimony. There is more than this in the “ full assurance of hope ;” my soul *counts upon a person who has made a promise*. (See v. 12-20.) Hence, there is the leaning upon God, (a different thing from merely believing a testimony,) and, moreover, a looking “ within the veil.” It is founded upon what is perfectly

immutable, not upon anything produced here, and which might be liable to change. Entering into that within the veil, God's throne must be shaken, before my hope. Faith rests upon a testimony that has come out, but it carries me up, and hope reckons on Him who is there. The "full assurance of understanding" goes a step further. Not only have I an object on which my heart and conscience rest; but it *takes up God's counsels*, it "understands," I can say, "It became God" to do this, and to do that.

When speaking about "hope," we must recollect, it is not, in the least, like human hope, (as though the thing was uncertain). In ordinary language, I might say, 'I hope such a person will come to-morrow,' when that was extremely uncertain. Not so with "hope," in divine things. All that is meant is, that the thing hoped for, is not present:—

“ If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it ;” because it is certainly coming.

“ Be not slothful.”—There is a certain characteristic *diligence* ; otherwise we shall be going into the world at every step. We have the flesh, and the devil (who is going about seeking to devour) to do with. Moreover, we have to come to God. Whether we look at God, the flesh, or Satan, it is always *diligence* that characterises faith. The devil will be diligent if we are not. “ Wherefore, the rather, my brethren, *give diligence* to make your calling and election sure.” Life is shown in action ; of a man that never stirs, I cannot say, ‘ he is alive.’ Satan is in the path, and the thing that guards us against Satan is diligence ; without it, we shall get tripped, and be beaten. Satan cannot touch the new nature ; (1 John v, 18 ;) hence, temptations, really,

come to be siftings, and show if faith be in us. “Be not slothful, but followers of them who through *faith* and *patience* inherit the promises.”

We have need of patience. All this sifting will purify us. Else (where there is not patience and faith,) it will prove there is no real anchor within the veil, and the ship will be driven.

Then, he turns to show them, (while there will be temptations, and, therefore, the need of faith and patience,) how strong and infallible the anchor is.—“When God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself, saying, Surely, blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, *after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*” But he did not get it all at once, there was a little failure, (*i.e.* as to Ishmael,) just as he had gone down into Egypt, at the

outset, when there was a famine in the land, and, (while Sarah was in "the house of Pharaoh," Gen. xii, 14-16.) had acquired cattle, and Egyptian riches in abundance. (Hagar was an *Egyptian* woman). A man may get what satisfies nature, and seem to be going on very comfortably, when far off from God. But he had no altar in Egypt. Every camel and ox that came in ought to have broken his heart, and made him feel where himself and his wife were.

"Saul," we read, "*tarried* for Samuel seven days," but when he saw that he came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him, he offered the burnt offering. Just when he had done, Samuel came, and said, "Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God—thy kingdom shall not continue." (1 Sam. xiii.) He had not had patience. A person may go on *imitating faith*

and the actings of faith, for a long time.

In Jacob, there was *real faith* in the promises ; (though he could not trust God about them ;) he used unholy means, to secure them, just as one might use unholy means to do God's work ;—but God did not take the promises from him, but he exercised and chastened him, so that, at the end, he had to say, “ Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, &c.” It is a troubled and distressing scene of exercise and sorrow.

We have need of patience. Faith is shown in the path, and God will put it to the test, while He is counted upon for power to accomplish the promises, as well as for faithfulness to secure them. And Jacob had to learn this lesson. In the end, when Joseph wants to get the blessing from his father for Manasseh, instead of Ephraim, the old man crosses his

hands, and says, "Not so, my son, not so." God will accomplish His purpose.

And mark, further, how He sustains our faith. (*v.* 16-20.) He put faith, in Abraham, still more to the test by telling him to offer up Isaac, and He then confirmed it by an oath. God exercises our patience ; but, while He exercises our patience, He gives "a strong consolation" to those who are exercised. Of old, the ark "went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them. (*Num.* x, 38.) They were not to rest in the wilderness, still there was a little respite by the way. And there is this refreshment by the way to strengthen and cheer those who are in the way.

The great Heir is already crowned with glory and honour. (*v.* 19-20.) Thus, we have our hope confirmed in a manner, in which Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob had not. It is a *heavenly* hope, because it “entereth into that within the veil,” and it is a *sure* and *steadfast* hope, because of Jesus having entered already there, (as our forerunner,) and, moreover, by the Holy Ghost’s being *sent down*. “Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, &c.,” but we have more than even that, we have “the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven,” the witness of the glorification of Jesus, and “the earnest of our inheritance.” Our consolation is strong. But we shall find we have “need of patience.”

FATHER, I know that all my life
 Is portioned out for me,
 And the changes that will surely come,
 I do not fear to see ;
 But I ask Thee for a present mind
 Intent on pleasing Thee.

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love
Through constant watching, wise
To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
And to wipe the weeping eyes ;
And a heart *at leisure from itself*
To soothe and sympathize.

I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,
Seeking for some great thing to do,
Or secret thing to know ;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go.

Wherever in the world I am,
In whatsoe'er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts,
To keep and cultivate ;
And a work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom I wait.

So I ask Thee for the daily strength,
To none that ask denied,
And a mind to blend with outward life
While keeping at Thy side,

Content to fill a little space,
If *Thou* be glorified.

And if some things I do not ask
In my cup of blessing be,
I would have my spirit filled the more
With grateful love to Thee—
And careful—less to serve Thee *much*,
Than to please Thee *perfectly*.

There are briars besetting every path
Which call for patient care ;
There is a cross in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer ;
But a lowly heart that leans on Thee,
Is happy anywhere.

In a service which Thy love appoints
There are no bonds for me ;
For my secret heart is taught "the truth"
That makes Thy children "free ;"
And a life of self-renouncing love,
Is a life of liberty !

CALEB.

JOSH. XIV. 6—12.

“ We are saved by hope”—but hope is divine certainty, because it is connected with the purpose of God. All His own counsel is before God, and it shall stand. He has measured the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment by the resources of His own grace, His own wisdom, and His own strength. Neither the frailty of the creature, nor the power of the adversary, shall prevent the blessing of those, who are “ the called according to the purpose of God ; for whom He did foreknow, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.” It is this result of the purpose of God, which is the object of the hope of the Christian. It is not the hope of forgiveness of sins, neither the hope of righteousness, nor the hope of eternal life, pro-

perly ; for the hope, of which the Apostle speaks, is based on these wondrous blessings, which are, already, secured, by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing short of these blessings can result from the work of the Holy Ghost, at one and the same time, communicating life to the soul, and presenting Jesus to it, as the object of faith. If there be uncertainty of hope, it is because the soul is not really reposing on Christ Himself, and His perfect work. Whenever this is the case, (and how common it is, alas, we too well know,) the thing hoped for, is the ascertainment of forgiveness of sins, and righteousness, instead of pardon and righteousness being the groundwork of hope. But real, scriptural hope, being the expectation of that, in manifestation, which is, already, known in the consciousness of the soul, by faith, yea, and enjoyed, too, by the Spirit—

is, necessarily, connected with patience. "Hope that is seen, is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? but if we hope for that we see not, then do we *with patience* wait for it." When Christ shall appear, not only will the saints appear with Him in glory, but their longings for the full enjoyment, without any hindrance, of that which is theirs already, shall be fully realised.

But notwithstanding the certainty and blessedness of our hope, it has pleased our God, who knows the cravings of that life which is communicated by the Holy Ghost, and flows from union with our risen and glorified Head, to make provision for the sustainment and encouragement of our souls, by giving to us the Holy Ghost, as the earnest of the inheritance. He is not the earnest, so much, in the way of leading our souls from what we do taste now, to what

we may expect to taste when we are in glory ; but it is, rather, in the way of the divine certainty of those things which God has prepared for them that love Him, that He *now* gives the earnest of the Spirit into our hearts. The light in which we regard the truth of the earnest of the Spirit, will make a great difference as to the stability of our souls. This relation of the Holy Ghost to us, is distinct from those spiritual instincts which He Himself has communicated. Being given as the earnest, in consequence of the certainty of the determinate counsel of God, in bringing those whom He has called to glory, He is, at once, the Spirit of revelation, to show to us the things which are freely given to us of God, and the Spirit of communion, so as to enjoy all that which He thus shows us, but, at the same time, He is Himself the earnest, which never could have been given, save as the witness of

accomplished redemption, and because of the certainty of future glory. It is thus that so many blessings, which, as to actual manifestation, and real unhindered enjoyment, are yet future, are spoken of, most truly, as present. This blessed truth might be largely illustrated ; in one sense, we wait for our blessings, in another, we have them already. The manifestation of our sonship, is yet future, but we wait not to be sons. “Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth yet appear what we shall be, (rather what we shall be, hath not yet been manifested,) but we know that when He shall appear, (be manifested,) we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” But Christ has already *manifested* Himself to us, “although He be not manifested to the world. So again, He is gone to prepare *mansions* for us in the Father’s house, and we expect that He will come again, and receive us

unto Himself, that, where He is, there we may also be." This is the characteristic hope of the Church ; but, mark, " the earnest," resulting from this certain hope—" If a man love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode (mansion) with him." Most blessed earnest—the Father and the Son, now, in the unity of the Spirit, making their mansion with us! We *are* sons, *waiting* for the adoption—strange language ! yet how real—we wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body ; because to be in a glorified body, like Christ Himself, with Christ in heaven, is the proper suited place for the sons of God. But because of this, being born of God now, *we are* sons, and God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying " Abba, Father." Observe, the Spirit is not given, to make us sons ; but because

we are sons ; and although not actually in our native home, yet God enables us to speak, and think, and act, as His sons, although we are as unknown to the world, as Jesus Christ Himself was, while He was in the world.

We need faith, for “ we walk by faith ;” we need hope, “ for we are saved by hope”—but we need, also, the Holy Ghost Himself, as the present earnest of our inheritance, lest we faint and grow weary by the way. Grace and glory are two consecutive links in the golden chain of God—but, for the most part, to us, there is, practically, an interval, filled up by painful experience on our part, and yet such experience, as causes us to learn grace now, (“ manifold grace,”) in a manner we could hardly learn it in glory, just as, assuredly, we shall learn it in glory, even “ the riches of grace,” after a manner inconceivable by us at present. The joyous,

triumphant song of Israel, on the banks of the Red Sea, witnessing the grace and power of God, in their deliverance from Egypt, stopt not short of their immediate introduction into Canaan. The Holy Ghost, who indited that song, could not celebrate the unbelief of Israel, but the grace, power, and faithfulness of God. “Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed : Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation. The people shall hear and be afraid : sorrow shall take hold on *the inhabitants of Palestina*. 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*.” There was no reason why deliverance out of Egypt should not have been introduction into Canaan ; the grace and power which had effected the one was pledged for the accomplishment

of the other, and could alone effect it. But how different is the actual experience of God's people, whether typically redeemed, as Israel, or really, as the Church, from the truth of God which either may celebrate. Israel trembled before those whom they mentioned in their song as melting away before them. And the whole wilderness history intervenes between deliverance from Egypt and introduction into Canaan. And we ourselves, also, often tremble before already conquered enemies — triumphing, by faith, the moment we bring in God, as manifested in Christ; but often dropping the notes of triumph, for murmurs, or fears, because the heart is not really occupied with the things freely given to us of God.

It is truly refreshing, in the sorrowful history of Israel in the wilderness, to find such a one as Caleb. He is not one of the great public actors, as

Moses, Aaron, or Joshua. One of the "heads of the children of Israel," of the honoured tribe of *Judah*, he was going the weary round of the wilderness with his brethren, but assuredly, with lighter heart and firmer step, than they; and, in this respect, he so blessedly illustrates what the earnest of the Spirit is, and, at the same time, is a type of that class of "unknown" ("yet well known") christians, who, apart from murmuring and strife, are steadily wending their way to that rest, of which the Lord Himself has spoken to them. Historically, Caleb presents to us a feature which we find not in Moses himself. He had known Egypt for the first forty years of his life, he had trodden Canaan forty days, he had gone through the wilderness, and had passed over Jordan into the possession of Canaan, and was still full of manly vigour and courage. He was one of those, who, through faith, had obtained pro-

mises, and was not satisfied till he was in actual possession.

“ On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the Land of Egypt,” Moses and Aaron number Israel in the wilderness of Sinai, every male by their polls, from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to war in Israel.” (Numbers i. 1—4.) Again, “ after the plague,” in which twenty four thousand perished, in the matter of Baal Peor, Moses and Eleazer the priest number Israel, in the plains of Moab, by Jordan, near Jericho ; but there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest had numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai ; for the Lord had said of them they shall surely die. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun.” (Numb. xxvi, 1, 4, 64, 65.)

While this verified the word of God—we may still ask, what hindered Caleb and Joshua from being worn out by the trial of the wilderness, which had worn out all their generation. Let Caleb himself answer. “Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal : and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land ; and *I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.* Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me, made the heart of the people melt : *but I wholly followed the Lord my God.* And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as *He said*, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses,

while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness ; and now, lo, I am this day four-score and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me : *as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.* Now, therefore, give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day ; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced ; *if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out,* as the Lord said.” (Josh. xiv. 6-12.)

“ I brought him word again as it was in mine heart.” Caleb owned that it was a pleasant land, which the Lord gave to the children of Israel, and *his heart* was set upon it. He could discern the difference between that land and Egypt ; between the land which was cultivated with

all the appliance of human skill, “watered with the foot,” and “a land of hills and valleys, which drinketh water of the rain of heaven : a land which the Lord thy God careth for : the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” His treasure was in the land, and there his heart was. Others esteemed Egypt preferable to the wilderness, when their hearts were discouraged from going up to possess Canaan, on account of the difficulties in the way ; but Caleb esteemed Canaan, with all the difficulty of entering into it, as far more precious than Egypt with present ease, but with present bondage also. Canaan was in his heart all the time he traversed the wilderness. He had tasted the fruit of Canaan ; his eyes had beholden it ; and he had not the report of others as to the land, but *his own* “feet had trodden it.” It

was this which made him tread the wilderness with such elastic steps. Besides this he had the sure word of the Lord's promise to support him. He knew the certain end unto which his wanderings, in company with others, must lead. As they encamped or broke up, at the commandment of the Lord, he could either "rest in his tent," or traverse the wilderness with the land in his heart; and say, after every weary march, or lengthened encampment—the wilderness time is far spent, the day of again seeing the land is at hand. As his cotemporaries wasted away, how solemn must have been the admonition to his soul against the sin of unbelief. How forcibly must the rapid passing away of that evil generation have brought these words to his remembrance, "Because all these men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten

times, and have not hearkened to my voice, surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers; neither shall any of them that provoked me see it; but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it." "God hath given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." This was the comfort, strength, and establishment of Apostles as well as of common Christians. Christ himself, to whom the Spirit ever bears witness, is thus, not only the object of faith, but the object of desire also. It is as the object of desire that He is known now in earnest by the Spirit. Experimentally, He is never known by the soul in all His own attractive loveliness, until He be received as "all our salvation." The selfish heart of man cannot bear to contemplate such perfection, condemnatory

of itself, until that lawful selfish craving is answered, "What must I do to be saved," by, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." We can only study Him, by knowing Him as the Saviour. But, when He is so known, what graciousness do we find in His own word, "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." He comes now into the heart, by the Spirit, blessed earnest, indeed, of His coming for us, to be with Him where He is. It is thus too that the Apostle speaks to us. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His ; and *if Christ be in you.*"—Well indeed says another. "Whom, not having seen ye, love ; in whom, though *now* ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salva-

tion of your souls." If the Spirit of God shows to us the things, which are freely given to us of God, He shows them, not as in the distant future, but, being Himself the earnest of the inheritance, He now glorifies Jesus, taking of His things, and showing them unto us, and showing them as ours now, in Him, so that we can taste and handle our own blessings. We too are solemnly warned as to the evil of unbelief, in finding many an object, to which we have fondly clung, passing away, so that bitter disappointment would ensue, were it not, that, by the Spirit, we, more fully, realized, and were led, more deeply, to taste, the unfailing blessings, which are ours in Christ.

"Nevertheless, my brethren that went up with me, made the heart of the people melt : *but I wholly followed the Lord my God.*" It is no presumption in any of us to answer to the testimony of God to our own

souls. So did Caleb—for the Lord said : “ But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and *hath followed me fully.*” Caleb had searched the land, following the Lord his God, there, when the Lord Himself was his guide and defence, and no enemy could set upon him. He had seen that the land “ was exceeding good,” but he reckoned on the good pleasure of the Lord in His people. “ If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us.” The soul of Caleb rested entirely on the grace and power of God, which had caused them to triumph at the Red Sea, and had kept the spies in searching the land. The same grace and power could alone lead them into possession of the land ; on this, and this alone, he reckoned. Only let his soul recognize where the Lord was, and he could see victory—but the very same principle of fully following the Lord, which made him

encourage the people to go up, would hinder from the attempt, after that the Lord had said, "To morrow turn again the way of the Red Sea"—for the Lord had no delight in the people. Where the Lord was, there was both grace and power, and Caleb had to learn *that* grace and power, for forty years, in the wilderness, on which he had so early reckoned, and which, eventually, put him in actual possession of the very part of the land which he had trodden with his feet. He fully followed the Lord through the wilderness, and knew Him there, as his guardian and guide, whom he had known, as a mighty deliverer out of Egypt, and who had introduced him into Canaan, and enabled him to see, and search, the land, and know its fruits.

The Spirit of God is presented to us in direct contrast with the spirit of the world. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world,

but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God, which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The spirit of the world is one of restless activity and enquiry, either to find out something new, or to invent some remedy against the multiform misery of man. It may take either a speculative or a practical turn—but it never discovers *the* satisfactory remedy. "Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity." The spirit of the world is ever advancing, but never reaching its end, leading ever to that which is coming, but never yet has come. The spirit which is of God, is the very opposite. The Holy Ghost produces in the saint "the spirit of a sound mind." He leads the soul backward to the

past, and forward to the future. He steadies the soul, by leading it to repose on the already accomplished work of Christ on the Cross ; and from thence He animates the soul, by leading it into the glorious prospect set before it—a prospect, not of some yet undiscovered panacea for man's misery—that is found in the past, in the Cross of Christ—neither of a vague and ignorant futurity, but that “ hidden wisdom of God, concerning things which God has prepared before the foundation of the world to our glory, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which God hath revealed to us by His Spirit. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth, and can never have a higher subject of testimony than He has at present, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which is to follow. He cannot reveal to us higher blessings than He reveals at present ; and

He Himself is the present earnest in the heart of the believer, because those blessings are so certain, and already secured in Christ. If Caleb needed to have his heart occupied with Canaan, to cheer his spirit in the wilderness, we not only need the earnest of the Spirit for the same purpose, but also to keep us from the seductive power of the spirit of the world; and this He does by showing to us the things freely given to us of God, as so high and blessed, that they have not even been conceived by the daring boldness of man's heart. As the earnest, He leads the soul to long to see Christ as He is, and to be like Him; and thus, too, leads in the path of fully following the Lord. To be ever with the Lord, is the blessing in prospect—but to have Him ever with us now, is the consequent earnest. “Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to

you." How is this made good, by the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter. Oh, that, with purpose of heart, we might cleave unto the Lord—and say, in the midst of sorrowful experience, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage."

"And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, *as He said.*" The Holy Spirit, as the earnest, is the Spirit "of promise"—not only as being Himself the "promise of the Father," but substantiating promises to the soul: as Caleb saw his contemporaries die off, day by day, how much he needed the encouragement of the specific promise of the Lord, "the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said." The Holy Ghost is the quickener, He is the earnest, and He is also the Holy Spirit of promise, thus giving special value to the word, to the scriptures, bringing

it to remembrance, and applying a familiar text with unknown power, because such a promise, or such a scripture, exactly suits the circumstances of our need. "As He said." How important is this—subjection of mind to the authority of Scripture, no less distinguishes the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from the spirit of the world, than it distinguishes real spirituality, from cloudy mysticism. The Scripture becomes of increasing value in proportion as the spirit of the age advances. As applied by the Spirit of truth, it gives the consciousness of certainty, when the spirit of the world, in the freedom of enquiry, is leading into general scepticism. The result of these two conflicting spirits—the spirit of the world, and the Spirit which is of God, is that the one will lead to set the stability of created things, against the promise of Christ coming, the other to throw the soul more entirely

on His promise. (2 Pet. iii.) But the soul needs now establishment and encouragement, and the Holy Ghost, as the earnest, gives such a reality to the promises of God in Scripture, that the soul is enabled to set, "As He says," against all appearances of things, or opinions of men.

"As my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." All the weary round of forty years of toil in the wilderness, had not impaired the strength of Caleb. He had sung that wondrous note—"The Lord is my strength." He had acted on that strength when he searched the land, and was ready, at the prime of manhood, to go up and possess the land; and now, at four-score and five years, he finds his strength the same; "the Lord was his strength." And what is the Holy Ghost to us, in one aspect as the earnest, but "the Spirit of power." In the strictest sense,

the power which acts towards us and in us, is always the same ; but it is only known by faith—even “ the exceeding greatness of the power of God, answering to that which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead.” If we attempt the smallest difficulty without regard to this power we are foiled ; but if the greatest obstacle presents itself, through faith in the Lord our strength, we prevail. Hence the word, “ Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” The Spirit witnesses to us of the triumph of Christ ; but His indwelling in us, is a fruit of that triumph. The Lord has triumphed for us, and He also triumphs in us. We celebrate, already, our victory—through Him who loved us, as more than conquerors, God “ is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh *in us.*”—But that power is now ac-

tually manifested in strengthening the saints with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness. The characteristic form of power now is *endurance*.—It is by *patient* continuance in well doing, that we seek for glory, honor and immortality. The spirit of the world is that of impatience with delay, and desire of grasping some supposed present blessing — but the Spirit which is of God, being Himself the earnest of a certain inheritance, becomes, especially, the Spirit of power, in enabling us patiently to wait for what is ours already. It is thus that, although “the outer man may decay, the inner is renewed day by day.” The Holy Ghost keeps the eye looking on invisible realities, making them, as it were, more palpable day by day. Each day brought Caleb nearer to Canaan,—which was “in his heart.” Blessed, indeed, to see

an aged disciple, in whom the cravings of the mind for novelty have passed away, who has gone through, it may be, also, the ordeal of worldly fascination, who has found his progress very chequered indeed, disappointment succeeding disappointment, desire dropping off after desire, yet all tending to one thing, to make him know the value of one blessed object, even Jesus. "I have written unto you, fathers," says the Apostle, "because ye have known Him that was from the beginning." What conscious strength there is in thus having a single object, hardly ever practically attained, but through a process of unlearning—but that single object is the one object whom the Spirit of truth has been continually witnessing to in our souls, as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the great end and centre of the eternal counsels of the Godhead. This is the strength of old age. In the never ceasing conflict, when

the buoyancy of natural powers ceases, the warfare is carried on by a deeper sense of the power that worketh in us. Faith lives when the natural faculties are impaired. The soul of the aged disciple is true to Jesus, where the powers of memory and recognition fail. He that "has borne from the belly, and carried from the womb," says, "And even to your old age, I am He ; and even to hoar hairs, I will carry you ; I have made and I will bear ; even I will carry and will deliver you." By the presence of the Holy Ghost, the Father and Son abide now in the soul of the believer ; by the presence of the Holy Ghost, believers can say, " Our conversation is in heaven." And thus, " those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright."—It is when the flesh is tho-

roughly crushed, that we have strength with God, and prevail. And thus, even, as Caleb, the believer goes from strength to strength, mortifying the deeds of the body, through the Spirit, at the same time that the abiding presence of the Spirit, is the sure witness of righteous judgment of God passed on the flesh in the Cross of Christ, and the Spirit of revelation of heavenly and eternal realities, and of present communion with Him.

“If so be the Lord be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said.” There is no doubt, or uncertainty, in this “if so be.” It was only reckoning on the Lord’s faithfulness to His promise, and on His ability to perform it; at the same time, implying, that this was his only ground of confidence. But with what confirmed confidence could he reckon on the Lord being with him, whose presence had been with him when he searched the land, and

whose presence had been with him while traversing the wilderness. And is it not so with the believer now?—quickened by the Spirit, when dead in trespasses and sins, he has known the same Spirit, as revealing Jesus to his soul, as the salvation of God. He knows the same Spirit, as the abiding Comforter—glorifying Jesus, taking of His things and showing them unto the soul. He knows, by the presence of the same Comforter, that God hath called him unto His own kingdom and glory ; and that same Spirit now shows to the soul what is the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Well may we use the words of one of old, and say, If there were any darkness or uncertainty as to the future, surely, the Holy Ghost would not now “ have showed us all these things, nor would He, as at this time, have told us such things as these.” May we have more con-

sciousness of the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, abiding with us, *because of our acceptance in Christ*, the witness of the infinite value of His precious blood-shedding and of His one only righteousness, which God alone regards—and, thus, telling us out, these things, and making us to see, to taste, and to enjoy them. Having such an earnest, as the Holy Ghost Himself, we understand, that our actual entrance into glory, is only a result of what is already possessed in grace. We can use those wonderful words “much more,” in reference to all which is before us—because, so to speak, the future glory and needed strength by the way, is less wonderful, than the already accomplished work of Christ on the Cross, and His being already made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. “If the Lord be with me,” says Caleb; we say, substantially,

the same in our appropriate language, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in us." Why dwelleth He in us, but because of the certainty of our glorious resurrection—as it follows; He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by ("because of" marg.) His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Or again: are we "God's workmanship—the end of His noble work, is, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." "Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given to us the earnest of the Spirit. *Therefore* we are always confident." He which hath begun the good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

How fully did Caleb find the Lord with him, as he said. When they searched the land, "they ascended by the South and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the children of Anak, were." These were

the terror of the ten spies. (Numb. xiii. 22-23.) But, with the Lord with him, as he said, how valiantly does Caleb fight against them, and prevail. "And unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he gave a part among the children of Judah, according to the commandment of the Lord to Joshua, even the city of Arba the father of Anak, which city is Hebron. And Caleb drave thence the three sons of Anak, Sheshai, and Ahiman and Talmai, the children of Anak." We can now say, by faith, "more than conquerors through Him who loved us." And "the Lord will bruise Satan under our feet, shortly."

And what did Caleb learn in the land, but that the Lord delighted in His people, and took pleasure in the prosperity of His servants? In the land, as well as in the wilderness, the presence of the Lord would be his joy. When in actual possession of the inheritance, although the Holy Ghost

will no longer be needed, as the earnest, yet His abiding indwelling is an essential and eternal blessing. The Holy Ghost is given, because the redeemed are “presented, through the death of Christ, holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable, in the sight of God.” He comes to “abide with them for ever.” And when Christ shall introduce them personally into the presence of the Father, the Holy Ghost still abideth with them, and dwelleth in them. His relation, as the earnest, appears to be the characteristic of the Church’s *present* portion. He could not come till “Jesus was glorified.”—When again poured out on millennial Israel, they will be in actual possession of their inheritance, so that He will not be in this relation, because the earnest of what is actually possessed, and enjoyed, is not needed. It is to the Church, as formally set up on earth at Pentecost, that He alone

stands in this wonderful and blessed relation.

May we know the exceeding present blessedness of our portion ; and, whilst rejoicing in hope, and patient in tribulation—may we walk in the fear of the Lord and comfort of the Holy Ghost. Is the Spirit of the world that of more than ordinary restlessness and excitement—the word is “ Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.” Is not the same fountain of joy opened to us as to the disciples of old ? and is there not the same power of tasting it ? then, why is it so little with us as with them ? “ The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Ghost.” “ The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” It is a joy independant of circumstances ; it is a joy brought into the midst of sorrow (as sorrowful yet *always* rejoicing). It is the

joy brought down from heaven to earth, the joy of the new song struck in heaven, and answered on earth. Oh ! that heaven's wonder, and new theme of joy, the Lamb, which had been slain, may be, to us, the abiding novelty and constant subject of joy. "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord always." Be it our portion, Lord Jesus, through the holy anointing descending from thyself unto us ! But in this joy, thou shalt have the pre-eminence—for thou art anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

JESUS RISEN, A REMEDY FOR ALL EVIL.

—
JOHN XX.
—

DEEP and varied as are the necessities of the soul, they are all met by the death and resurrection of Christ. If it be a question of sin that affects the soul, the resurrection is the glorious proof of the complete putting away of it. The moment I see Jesus at the right hand of God, I see an end of sin, for I know He could not be there, if sin was not fully atoned for. “He was delivered for our offences ;” He stood as our representative ; He took upon Him our iniquities, and went down into the grave under the weight thereof. “But God raised Him from the dead ;” and, by so doing, expressed His full approbation of the work of redemption. Hence, we read, “He was raised again for our justification.” Resurrection, therefore, meets the

need of the soul, as it regards the question of sin.

Then again, when we proceed further, and enter upon the trying and difficult path of Christian testimony, we find that Jesus risen is a sovereign remedy for all the ills of life. This is happily exemplified for us in John xx. Mary repairs to the sepulchre, early in the morning. And, as we learn from the parallel passage in Mark, her heart was not only sad at the loss of her gracious friend, but also tried by the difficulty of removing the stone from the mouth of the cave. The resurrection removed, at once, her *sorrow*, and her *burden*. Jesus risen filled the blank in her desolated affections, and removed from her shoulders the load which she was unable to sustain. She found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre, and she found also her beloved Lord, whom death had, for a season, snatched from her view. Such mighty things

could resurrection accomplish on behalf of a poor needy mortal.

Nor is it otherwise with us now. Have our hearts been broken and bereaved by the stern, rude hand of death? Has his cold breath chilled our affections? What is the remedy? Resurrection. Yes ; resurrection that great restorer, not merely of “tired,” but of ruined, nature, fills up all blanks—repairs all breaches—remedies all ills. If the conscience be affected by a sense of sin, resurrection sets it at rest, by the assurance that the Surety’s work has been fully accepted.—If the heart be bowed down with sorrow, and torn by the ravages of death, resurrection heals, soothes, and binds it up, by securing the restoration and reunion of all who have gone before ; it tells us to “sorrow not as others which have no hope, for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with

Him." (1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.) It is commonly thought that time fills up all the blanks which death has made in the affections ; but the spiritual mind could never regard time, with its sorrowful vicissitudes, as a substitute for resurrection and its immortal joys. The poor worldling may, perhaps, find, in passing circumstances, something to fill up the void which death makes, but not so the christian ; to him, resurrection is the grand object, to that he looks, as the only instrumentality by which all his losses can be retrieved, and all his evils remedied.

So also in the matter of burden and pressure from present circumstances ; the only relief is in resurrection. Till then, we have but to toil on from day to day, bearing the burden, and enduring the travail, of the present sorrowful scene. We may, like Mary, feel disposed to cry out, " Who shall roll us away the stone ? " Who ? The risen Jesus. Apprehend

resurrection, and you are raised above the influence of every burden. It is not that we may not have many a burden to carry ; no doubt, we may ; but our burdens shall not sink us into the dust, because our hearts are buoyed up by the blessed truth that our Head is risen from the dead, and is now seated at the right hand of God, and, moreover, that our place is there with Him. Faith leads the soul upward, even into the holy serenity of the divine presence—it enables us to cast our burden on the Lord, and to rest assured that He will sustain it for us. How often have we shrunk from the thought of some trial or burden which appeared in the distance, like a dark cloud upon the horizon, and yet, when we approached it we “found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.” The risen Jesus had rolled it away. He has removed the dark cloud, and filled up the scene with the light of His own

gracious countenance. Mary had come to the sepulchre expecting to find a great stone between her and the object of her affections, but, instead of that, she found Jesus risen between her and the dreaded difficulty. She had come to anoint a dead body, but arrived to be blessed and made happy, by a risen Saviour. Such is God's way—such, the power and value of resurrection. Sins, sorrows, and burdens, all vanish, when we find ourselves in the presence of a living Lord. When John, in the island of Patmos, had fallen to the dust, as one dead, what was it that raised him up? Resurrection—the living Jesus; “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” This set him on his feet. Communion with Him who had wrested life from the very grasp of death, removed his fears, and infused divine strength into his soul.

In the case of Peter and John, too,

we find another instance of the power of resurrection. In them it is not so much a question of sin, or sorrow, and burden, as of difficulty. Their minds are evidently puzzled by all that met their view at the sepulchre. To see grave-clothes so carefully arranged in the very tomb, was unaccountable. But they are only puzzled because, “as yet, they knew not the scripture that He must rise again from the dead.” Nothing but resurrection could solve their difficulty. Had they known that they would have been at no loss to account for the arrangement of the grave-clothes; they would have known that the Destroyer of death had been there, doing His mighty work, and had left behind Him the traces of His triumph. Such was the meaning of the scene at the tomb; at least, it was calculated to teach that lesson. The Lord Jesus had calmly and deliberately passed through the conflict. He had exhib-

ited no haste—no perturbation. He had taken time to set in order His grave-clothes and His tomb—He shewed that it required no strained effort, on His part, to vanquish the power of death. However, Peter and John knew not this; and, therefore, they went away to their own home. The strength of Mary's affection made her linger still; love was more influential than knowledge; and, though her heart was breaking, she remained at the sepulchre; she would rather weep near the spot where her Lord had lain, than go anywhere else. But resurrection settled every thing. It filled up the blank in Mary's broken heart, and solved the difficulty in the minds of Peter and John. It dried up *her* tears, and put a stop to *their* amazement. Jesus risen is, in good truth, the sovereign remedy for all evils, and nothing is needed but faith to use Him.

At v. 19, we have a fresh illustra-

tion of the principle on which we are dwelling. “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when *the doors were shut* where the disciples were assembled *for fear of the Jews*, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, “Peace be unto you.” Here the closed door evidenced the fear of the disciples. They were afraid of the Jews. And what could remedy their fear? Nothing but communion with their risen Lord. Nor did He, (blessed be His name!) leave them destitute of that remedy; He appeared amongst them—He pronounced His benediction upon them. “Peace be unto you,” said He. “Peace,” not because their door was secured, but because Jesus was risen. Who could harm them, while they had, in their midst, the mighty Vanquisher of death and hell? There is unspeakable value in this word “peace,” used by such an One, at such a time. The peace

that flows from fellowship with the risen Son of God cannot be ruffled by the vicissitudes and storms of this world; it is the peace of the inner sanctuary—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Why are we so much troubled, at times, by the condition of things around us? Why do we betake ourselves, if not to the closed door, at least, to some other human resource? Surely, because we are not walking with our eye steadily fixed on Him who was dead, but who is alive for evermore, who has all power in heaven and on earth. Did we but realize that our portion is in Him, yea that He Himself is our portion, we should be far less affected by the prospects of this poor world. The politics, the agriculture, the commerce, of earth, would find their proper place in our hearts, if we could remember that! “we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in

God." It is commonly said, that while we are here we must take an interest in the circumstances, the prospects, the destinies of earth. But then, "our citizenship is in heaven." We are not of earth at all. Those who are risen with Christ are no longer of earth. All that in us (I mean believers) which could have any affinity with earth—all that which can be called nature, is dead, and should be reckoned as dead, and our life is in heaven where we are now in spirit and principle. No doubt, if we only see ourselves as earthly men, we shall be occupied with earthly things; but if we see ourselves as heavenly men, we shall, as a consequence, be occupied about heavenly things. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek *those things which are above*." This is simple. "*Things above*" are those which we are commanded to seek, and that because "we are risen with

Christ.” The difference between Abraham, in his day, and a believer, now, may be thus stated; Abraham was going from earth to heaven; the believer has come from heaven to earth; *i. e.* in spirit, and by faith. Abraham was a pilgrim on earth, because *he sought* a heavenly country; the believer is a pilgrim because *he has gotten* a heavenly country. The christian should regard himself as one who has come from heaven, to go through the scenes and engagements of earth. This would impart a high and heavenly tone to his character and walk here. The Lord grant that it may be more so with all who name the name of Jesus.

It may be remarked, in conclusion, that the Lord Jesus remedied the fear of His poor disciples by coming into their midst, and associating Himself with them in all their circumstances. It was not so much a question of actual deliverance from

the matter that caused the fear, but rather raising their souls above it by fellowship with Himself. They forgot the Jews, they forgot their fear, they forget every-thing, because their souls were occupied with their risen Lord. The Lord's way, is often, to leave his people in trial, and to be with them therein. Paul might desire to get rid of the thorn, but the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is a far richer mercy to have the grace and presence of Jesus *in* the trial, than to be delivered *from* it. The Lord allowed Shadrach, Meshac, and Abednego to be cast into the furnace ; but, if He did, He came down and walked with them, therein. This was infinitely more gracious of Him, and more honourable to them, than if He had interposed on their behalf, before they were cast in.

May it be our heart's desire to find ourselves in company with the risen

Lord, as we pass through this trying scene, and then, whether it be the furnace of affliction, or the storm of persecution, we shall have peace ; whether, it be the bereavement of the heart, the burden of the shoulder, the difficulty of the mind, the fear or unbelief of the heart, all will be remedied by fellowship with Him who was raised from the dead.

O trust the Lord who bought thee,
O trust the sinner's Friend :
The wondrous Love that sought thee
Will keep thee to the end,
And give a glorious morrow
To this our night of pain,
And make the days of sorrow
Like shining after rain.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

AMOS. v. 4—5.

We are ever in danger of being led astray by using a style of phraseology beyond our actual experience. Every religious denomination has a number of expressions peculiar to itself, and one is liable to adopt such, without being able, practically, to enter into their meaning. Hence, the importance of bearing in mind that Christianity is not a mere set of expressions, but a divine reality—a living, acting, powerful influence, infusing itself into all the feelings and affections of the soul, and exhibiting itself in the life.

Now, one of those forms of expression, most frequently used, and little understood, is “communion.” Communion with God constitutes the soul and life of the Christian, and it is, therefore, of all importance, that he

the view of those who are engaged, and attracted, by outward form, rather by truth, and spirit, and life.

Let us, then, seek to realise the person of Christ. Let us endeavour to find Him, in the breaking of bread—in the ministry of the word—in the fellowship of Christians—in the offering up of prayer and praise—in a word, in every thing in which He has told us He will be found ; but let us not mistake happiness in these things for happiness in God, lest we be found, in our sphere, and according to our measure, helping on the peculiar evil of the last days, a FORM OF GODLINESS WITHOUT THE POWER.

ELECT OF GOD—HOLY AND
BELOVED.

EPH. i. 4-14.

God hath purposed in Himself to have, before Himself, that which shall reflect His own blessedness—He taking pleasure in us, and we taking pleasure in Him ; as it is said here : “ that we should be holy, and without blame *before Him* in love.” He will have His people of the same nature as Himself, gathered around Himself, happy there, and for Himself. His thought is not, merely, that we should have an inheritance ; we read of “ the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” He “ hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love ; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself,

according to the *good pleasure of His will*, to the *praise of the glory of His grace*, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”

And this is just the character of this Epistle ; the Apostle, in speaking of redemption, does so, not so much, as of something needed by us, in order to appear before God, as of these purposes of God concerning us. We may look at God as a Judge ; but, more than this, God is working for the display of the riches of the glory of His grace.

This lifts up the soul. God has thoughts and intentions about us. As in the case of a young man, whom, a person has (in ordinary language) “ taken up,” and is about to provide for, it is not a question of what the one was, but of the thoughts and intentions of the other, of what, in a word, he is, and will do, for the young man, so, though in a much more blessed sense, has God “ taken

up" poor sinners, that He might act towards them worthily of Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace. The other thing remains true, God is a Judge, and "we have forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ;" and we must understand this before we can enjoy our privileges in Christ.

God has "taken us up." Our very existence in the new creation, is the fruit of His purpose and thoughts about us. This has a double bearing.—It shows how we are to measure what God is doing for us; as a question of *God's* purpose; and besides being this measure, it makes us understand the source of it all. And this has a most happy effect; instead of looking at ourselves, and judging from ourselves, we look at God. Nothing but life-giving power could ever have wrought this. Our thoughts about God are, that He is the source of all our blessing. As

the young man, before alluded to, would have pleasure in thinking about the friend who had “taken him up,” so this thought about God is a happy thought, and, moreover, one of great sanctifying power.

God has “predestinated us unto the adoption of children.”—It is not here, simply, a question of purpose, (of God’s counsel, and, therefore, sure,) that to which He has predestinated us, is the present adoption of children. I, a poor sinner, a sinner of the Gentiles, had no title whatever to blessing, I trace all my title to God’s purpose, which He hath purposed in Himself. This is true also of the Jews, though, in a certain sense, they stood on different ground; Christ was “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,” but of the Gentiles it is said, “and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.” It is of grace, of God’s

free thought about us ; He has taken pleasure in us, as Joshua said to Israel : “ If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it unto us, a land which floweth with milk and honey.” We cannot boast in anything ; for we have not anything whatever wherein to boast, except in this, that God has taken delight in us to give us the adoption. The effect is most blessed ; we know Himself — “ after ye have known God, or rather are known of God.” That, He has predestinated us unto, is not a distant thing, nor yet merely salvation, (in the sense of escape from the wrath of God), it is the nearest place He could have put us into, not as with the Jews : “ I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born,” we are adopted with the “ adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Be-

loved.” Here we get, not only the source, but the manner—the source, God’s love ; the manner, in Christ.

“ The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us”—the Word that was in the beginning with God, and was God. But the light shone in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not. It is not said that there was want of power, but that men’s deeds were evil, and that, therefore, they would not come unto the light. A Christian who is walking carelessly does not like a godly Christian to come into contact with him, he feels condemned ; whenever the heart is not with God, light makes uneasy. But besides being light, “ In Him was life,” and that is what we needed ; while He shows us our evil, He is the good we need. Predestinated unto the adoption of children, it is *in Him*. Called according to God’s purpose, we are to be conformed to the image of His

Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. We are brought into the presence of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when Jesus goes away, He says, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, unto my God and your God." He has Himself met all our responsibility, otherwise the light would have been terrible. There are two things, substitution, and communication of life. In substitution, He stood alone. But, guilt being taken away, quickened together with Him, He presents us in the Father's presence, as He is.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins :"—but not merely

has the Son of God visited us when we were in our sins, not merely, either, been delivered for our offences. —“herein is our love (love with us) made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world.” We have no life apart from Christ ; we have no acceptance apart from Christ. He has made us accepted in the Beloved—the measure is just that. It is God’s delight to bring us, in Christ, and by Christ, into His own presence. We can go no further ; “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ,” writes John. We may enjoy it more and more, we may delight in it in deepened measure, but we cannot have anything beyond. When God speaks of glorifying Himself, or of our glorifying Him, it means through the display of what He is ; it is God’s glory to display Himself ; therefore, in this, which is

to the glory of His grace, we have the display of Himself.

And do not let us suppose that this goes beyond that we may think about, (a very natural thought,) the apostle says further on : “ For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” (Chap. iii. 14-19). It is not a matter of human wisdom, learning, or attainment ; in proportion as we become simple as little children, we shall understand these things, through the

Holy Ghost. “ God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.” It has nothing to do with human learning, except to set it aside ; lowliness of mind is what is needed.

“ The good pleasure of His will,” is not, simply, sovereignty,—it is the *good pleasure* of His will. God is acting in His love, displaying the will of His grace, “ taking up” poor, wretched, vile sinners, and unfolding, on these objects of His mercy, all the riches of His own goodness. The “ good pleasure of His will,” that which God takes delight in, is the ministering of the fulness of His blessing to us. Here the soul gets established. It is quite evident, that the measure of His goodness cannot be, in any sense, the measure of what we are, as deserving at His hands ; while it is His good pleasure, it is the good pleasure of His *grace*. And further, whilst I have need, for

the establishment of my soul, to learn what He is, to be delighting in the goodness of God, it is this too which sanctifies. If I could be always thinking of what He is, I should be perfectly happy, and there would be the reflection in me of that with which my soul was occupied.

We begin, often, at the wrong end. On what are we resting our acceptance?—it is not anything in ourselves, that will do. Or, is it a question of sanctification?—"beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord,"(i.e., *I look at the Lord*, and, as a consequence of my looking at the Lord, I reveal to men what He is.) Moses, on coming down from the Mount, was not enquiring whether his face shone, in order to know if he had been with God; others saw this.

It is such a comfort, to get to God and feel, that it is in Him, and from Him.

Where, naturally, would our souls rest? It is quite a natural feeling, if we have been convinced of sin, that we should want to get at ease, at peace, to know there is nothing against us, it is a natural feeling, a feeling that must be; but the Apostle here, is looking at those whom God has “taken up,” and He has “made us accepted in the Beloved.” That is God’s thought about us; He has shown us this grace in a particular way, and in a particular person—Christ. It is not merely a negative thing; He takes as positive delight in us, as He does in Jesus. He is no double-measure God.

“Put on as the elect of God,” Paul writes to the Colossians, “holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, &c.”—saints, and beloved ones of God, objects of God’s love, God’s

delight, (the measure of which is Christ,) thus He addresses them.. If I am beloved of a person, this draws out love. So the consciousness of God's love, God's delight produces links in affection, that exist not without it. My thought of being accepted is not merely, that my sins are put away, so that I could stand before Him,—I am the object of His delight ; holy affections are drawn out, and I pass through the world as a beloved one of God. We cannot suppose, in Christ's going through this world, (and this shows us our deficiency as Christians,) one single thing of it, that acts on our hearts, acting on His ; He was the beloved One of God—" This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and He was going through the world as such. Thus, too, should the Christian walk through the world with the consciousness of being beloved of God ; with this, we do not

want the world,—without it, we are obliged to turn to something that makes self the centre.

Young or old, that is what we are—*beloved of God*. Perhaps, you will say : ‘ Ah, but I am very proud, very worldly, I do not give up the things of the world ;’ very likely not, and that is a reason for your being reminded of this, that you may.

“ In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”—This is the leading thought in the Apostle’s mind. And remark, he speaks of that which is positively possessed, not of something we are hoping for, or expecting ; He “ *hath* made us accepted in the Beloved,” we “ *have* redemption through His blood,” &c. This grace of God, this “ good pleasure of His will” has planted and set us in it all. We may be practically destitute of the joy of these things,

but that is where we are. And He has given to those whom He has set in this place, the knowledge of His purpose as to the glory of Christ, as it goes on to say : “ wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence ; (the Apostle explains it :) having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself,” here again it comes from the good pleasure of His will, “ that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” Having placed the saints in all this fellowship and blessing, He imparts (as with Abraham—“ Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am about to do,”) unto them His thoughts. Not only has He accepted us in Christ, but He will have every thing brought under Christ’s domi-

nion and power—He is to gather together in one, all things in Christ—“even in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will : that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” We are joint-heirs with Christ. Hence the prayer at the end of the chapter.

We cannot deny, we do not deny, (whatever man's efforts to make the best of the world,) that sin is in the world ; there is not a single thing, take dress for instance, that does not

tell us that. There is not a single thing we are buying or selling, a single thing we are looking upon, that is not, in some sort, a proof of sin. All that man does for pleasure, is necessitated by sin; Adam in Paradise had no need of it. What makes the world get on without God? the principle of sin; this is running through every thing, it has got, so to speak, into the vital blood, and (though it be God's creation through which it runs,) it runs through every thing. Man builds his city, invents his instruments of music, (Gen. iv.,) and strives to make the world happy without God. Introduce God, and His amazing work, where men are occupied with gain or with pleasure, it is all wrong and out of place. Whether for pleasure, or for gain, God must be excluded. That is the character of the whole world, and to tack on the name of Christ does not mend it; an avaricious Christian (nomi-

nally such) is in nothing better than an avaricious heathen. God is lingering over it, but the existence of the gospel in the world, is proof that the world is lost. “We know,” says John, “that the whole world lieth in the wicked one ;” and again, “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” As it is, as a plain matter of fact, it is not God’s inheritance—Who is called its god ? Satan. God’s title cast away, through the lust of men, and the pride and power of Satan, whom they follow, God has designated Satan “the god of this world,” and made known to us (those who are of faith) the mystery of His will. The Apostle speaks here of hope (*v.* 18)—We *have* obtained an inheritance in Christ, and all things, are going to be put under Christ ; meanwhile (like Abraham, who had not so much as whereon to set his

foot) “having nothing and yet possessing all things,” the Christian walks through the world, as one beloved of God, in the consciousness that he is the object of God’s purposes, and of God’s delight. But what do we see in the Lord Jesus?—not, merely, that He has been designated the heir of all things; “the Father *loveth the Son* and hath given all things into His hand.” So too, our proper delight, is in knowing that we are beloved of God, and that God will have us before Himself, and for Himself—His delight in us, and our delight in Him. It is as a consequence of this love, that we shall have the glory of the inheritance. Where are our hearts? what is our joy? are we journeying, aye journeying, through the world in the blessed, joyful confidence of this secret of God?—then will the world be to us a “dry and thirsty land;” instead of finding delight in things

around, we shall have to guard against them, as against that which would bring us down to Satan's ground. Are we taking the world, with its pleasures and its gain? if so, we are entering into Cain's portion, and not into that of Abraham, and we are "enemies of the cross of Christ." Through these things, Satan is deceiving the world. Are we taking the position, (not of Adam before he sinned, not of Christ when He was in the world, neither of Christ in the glory, but) of the "men of the earth?"

The Lord give us to see, and so to estimate, so to value, that which is God's object, that we may have done with this present evil world.

FAITH'S CLUE IN SIN'S CONFUSIONS.

INTO creation, sin has brought confusion of every sort—confusion of thought, confusion of fact ; but the Christian has a key of interpretation to it all, he has the secret with him, by which he interprets every thing ; he sees the confusion, he goes through it all, he feels it, but he cannot set things right ; there are aching hearts he cannot touch, there are wrongs he cannot meddle with, yet, in the midst of all this labyrinth of evil, he knows the end of God.

My joy, my life, my crown !
My heart was meaning all the day,
Somewhat it fain would say ;
And still it runneth up and down
With only this, my joy, my life, my crown.

I'M GOING HOME.

 HEB. xi. 13.

I AM a stranger here,
 No home, no rest, I see,
 Not all earth counts most dear,
 Can wring a sigh from me;
 I'm going home.

Jesus ! Thy home is mine,
 And I, Thy Father's child,
 With hopes and joys divine,
 The world's a weary wild ;
 I'm going home.

Home ! O, how soft and sweet,
 It thrills upon the heart !
 Home ! where the brethren meet,
 And never, never part ;
 I'm going home.

Home ! where the Bridegroom takes
The purchase of His love ;
Home ! where the Father waits
To welcome her above ;
I'm going home.

And when the world looks cold,
Which did my Lord revile,
(A lamb within the fold,)
I can look up and smile ;
I'm going home.

When its delusive charms
Would snare my pilgrim feet,
I'll fly to Jesu's arms,
And yet again repeat,
I'm going home.

And as the desert wide,
The wilderness, I see,
Lord Jesus ! I confide
My trembling heart to Thee.
I'm going home.

While severing every tie
That holds me from the goal,
This, this can satisfy
The craving of the soul—
I'm going home.

Ah ! gently, *gently* lead,
Along the painful way,
Bid every word, and deed,
And every look to say,
I'm going *home*.

Hallelujah ! we are hasting
To our Father's house above ;
By the way our souls are tasting
Rich and everlasting love ;
In Jehovah is our boast
Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
