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THE WALK WITH GOD.

IN the beginning of the fifth chapter of Genesis, we find a marked distinction between the likeness of Adam, as created by God, and that of his offspring. From the first verse, we learn that, "in the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him;" even as God had previously said, (Gen. i. 26,) "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But Adam abode not in this holy, happy state. He fell; and, in his fallen state, (the third verse tells us,) he begat a son "in *his own* likeness, after *his* image." "How is the gold become dim, the most fine gold changed!"

In the second verse, we read, regarding Adam and his wife, that God "blessed them." Their original condition was one of blessing, of great blessing. Adam stood in the image of God, in the garden which the Lord

God had planted, surrounded with the tokens of His love, the lord of all ; and that nothing should be lacking, that he should not be alone in his blessedness, the Lord made him an helpmeet, a partner of his joys—one with a heart to beat in sympathy with his own. How blessed was this ! and yet there was a blessedness above it all, his first and highest,—communion with God. Adam *walked with God*, and conversed with Him in holy, happy intimacy ; this we learn from the narrative. (chap. ii. 15—19, 22 ; iii. 8, 9.) Adam and Eve lived in the presence of God ; God spake to them, and they were not afraid nor ashamed. They had no cause for fear or shame, for sin had not yet entered.

God with whom they were here visibly conversant, was the Son, the Word, or, as we usually speak, the Second Person. God in His essential being, no man hath seen at any time—the Son reveals Him. All the manifestations of God in times of old,

whether in creation, or personally to holy men of God, seem to have been in the person of the Son, or the Word, Him whose "delights were with the sons of men," and who has been openly manifested in these latter times, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

To return to Adam. We see the blessedness in which God placed him; but he abode not in it. How, then, did he lose it? By want of subjection to God,—by wilfulness; he would follow his own will, rather than God's will, and he reaped the bitter fruit of it.

It was God's will that placed Adam in the garden, in the midst of the blessing; it was his own will that put him out of the garden, in the midst of the curse; and so it ever has been. Look at the apostacies of which we read in the Scriptures, and you will find "self-will," in one shape or other,

* See John i. 3—18; Prov. viii. 1, 22—31; Matt. xvi. 13—16; 1 John v. 1.

the bitter root of each and all of them.

After his apostacy, we find that Adam has lost his communion with God; he no longer walks with God, but away from Him. The Lord God, as He was wont, comes down into the garden and calls unto Adam; but that voice and presence, once his exceeding joy, has no joy for him now; he hides himself from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden. God is here, as He was before; but Adam's confidence to approach Him is gone,—it is broken down by self-will. Wilfulness has come in, and holy confidence has departed; and so it ever must be. Now, we see Adam—still indeed in the garden of God, in the midst of all its beauty, but what a poor conscience-stricken, wretched sinner!—striving to hide his guilty head from Him whom he has known only in love. What a contrast does he herein afford to that faithful servant of God, the first utterance

of whose awakened life was, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" The one, in the midst of circumstances of blessing, but wretched, because wilful; the other, in the midst of circumstances of trial and sorrow, but blessed, because obedient—tribulation abounding, but consolation also abounding by Christ.

In chap. v. 22, we see that restored, which Adam had lost—"Enoch *walked with God.*" Again we find communion issuing in the walk; and to him is the distinct testimony given that "he pleased God." But further, Enoch "was not, for God took him:" here, he seems to be the type of the living saints who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, when He cometh.

We thus find in Enoch, what Adam lost; and possibly we learn (but on this I insist not,) what Adam's portion would have been, had he not fallen. We can hardly believe that he would have died, for death is not God's gift to His saints; it is the wages of

sin, it is the power of Satan,—the power which man's self-will has given to him ; and death we should not have known from God, if sin had not entered.

In connection with the testimony to Enoch, we are reminded of Paul's word to the Colossians : " We do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding ; that ye might *walk worthy* of the Lord unto *all pleasing*,"—and again to the Thessalonians : " Ye have received of us how ye ought *to walk and to please God*."

Enoch walked with God ; and he had this testimony, that *he pleased God*.

In the next chapter, we have the testimony to Noah. " Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations, and Noah *walked with God*." In the preceding verse we see the secret of this blessed testimony : " he found grace in the eyes of the Lord." In

Heb. xi. 7, we find the principle of his walk ; it was *faith*, not sight, as in the apostacy (Gen. iii. 6 ; vi. 2.) It was faith, working holy obedience : “ Thus did Noah : according to all that God commanded him, so did he.” How simple, how blessed, and how opposite to the walk merely by sense and sight, which leads us, in wilfulness, to do the very thing that God commands not to be done.

There is one very blessed and beautiful principle of the walk with God mentioned of Noah, in the epistle to the Hebrews—he was “ moved with fear.” This is an essential ingredient of the walk with God, and the very opposite to the rashness of self-will. At the present day it is especially needed, for, is not much that is called “ obedience,” more allied to self-will than to holy fear, and therefore without savour before God ? This can never be said of that which is obedience *in spirit and in truth* ; but it is, I think, the character of a great part of the “ obe-

dience" of the day—honest, well-intentioned, intelligent obedience, too. We see on the one hand a religion of ordinances and blind subjection; but on the other hand, what is worse,—self-will and independence; and on the border of the latter do those stand, who, through God's grace, have been led to see the opposite evil, and would avoid it. It is humiliating to think how near to error we may stand in truth, when we lapse from the spirit into the flesh. Alas! how easy is this transition; *it has taken place*, when we stand in the pride of our knowledge or acquirement, or in the assertion of our "right." It is plain that self, and not God, is exalted; and then we fall into the worse error of the two. Let us be watchful herein.

Obedience may be the bowing of the intellect, honestly, intelligently, to abstract truth; it may be the proud assertion of *right* in one who sees error and truth, to forsake the one and to bow to the other. *True obedience* is

the result of subjection to God ; it is meek and holy, and therefore free from that offensive, independent bearing which is so frequently met with, and which is so sad and grieving to the Spirit.

The fear of God will ever be allied to the love of God. As one should be the constraining motive to service, so the other should be the jealous guardian of our whole conversation, that we grieve not the heart of God, nor hinder His Holy Spirit. Adam failed in the fear of the Lord, and therefore he failed to walk with God. Noah was moved with fear, and therefore he walked with God.

We proceed a few chapters, and find God saying to Abraham, "I am the Almighty God ; *walk before me*, and be thou perfect." (chap. xvii.) Abraham, it would seem, had been for some time in a slumbering state, when God thus awakens him, just previously to the fullest opening of His covenant with him. This covenant we find in

chapters xii., xiii., xv., xxii.; but here we have it more enlarged, and sealed by the token of circumcision. Here, Isaac was named and promised. Here, also, we find Abraham, in the confidence of friendship, pleading for Ishmael, as in the next chapter he does for Sodom, and in chapter xx., for Abimelech. But previous to all this, and, as it were, the preparation fitting for it, he is told: "Walk before me." This was the word to Abraham; and "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." He might have replied, But, Lord, how can I? who is sufficient for these things? The answer is, "I am the *Almighty God*," even as that name is afterwards the strength for difficult requirement. (2 Cor. vi. 11-18). This is God's first revelation of Himself under the name. Abraham's obedience we find in the offering up of Isaac, (Gen. xxii.,) and again in his directions to his servant about a wife for Isaac: "The Lord before

whom I walk, will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way." (xxiv. 40). Thus do we see how Abraham, "the friend of God," walked—not after his own will. He believed in the Lord, and the Lord "counted it to him for righteousness." He obeyed the voice of the Lord, and "By myself have I sworn," the Lord said, "because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven." On the other hand, whenever he followed his own will, it was only to go astray.

Thus do we see God's will regarding His people; it is that they *walk with Him*.

It was His oft-repeated word to Israel, that they *walked contrary to Him*; and hence their misery. God knoweth that it is in walking with Him, that the happiness and holiness of His people are secure; and that a way of

their own, will ever prove a way of misery, in the end. So, God's word to us now—with the full provision to give effect to it in the weakest through the Man of His right hand—is, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." With man, there has been a measure of obedience or rebellion, according to the spirit that was in him; but in Jesus we find the full and blessed response to this call of our God. He could say of the days of His flesh, "I have set the Lord *always* before me." His moving principle was to do every thing in reference to the will of Him that sent Him; and this is just what the gospel history exhibits, (specially John's,) the SENT ONE doing the will of Him that sent Him; the contrast in this to the first Adam. His life is the history of full, perfect, willing subjection to God. Even in prospect of the Cross and all its shame and suffering, His word is still, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." We get a measure of this in believers; but

the one who is brought into the nearest and dearest communion with God, will probably be the one most conscious of failure, for he is brought to measure himself by the stature of the Lord, and to see himself in the full shining of His light. There, he will learn the true measure of human attainment, and yet without one despairing thought; for he learns it in the blessed consciousness of his acceptance in the Beloved; in the consciousness that his title to the glory, is the perfect work of Him, by whose side he feels the short-coming and failure of his holiest things. Doubtless, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and a countless multitude beside, have set the Lord before them, but this One only could say, "I have set the Lord *always* before me." In Him was the perfect, continual, unfailing obedience that nothing could turn from its object.

Enoch walked with God, and pleased Him. In Jesus this was perfect:

“I do *always* the things that *please Him.*” “This is my beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased.*”

Noah walked with God, and was moved with fear. This too we see perfect in Jesus, “He was heard in *that he feared.*”

Abraham, walked before the Lord. Again we see the pattern of what was perfect in the Beloved: “I have *set the Lord always before me.*”

The little features of grace and beauty which we see scattered through the family of God, are but the faint traces of what we see in their fulness and perfection in God's beloved Son, who is “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,” and just in the proportion that we are in communion with the Father and the Son, not only will our joy be full, but it will be manifested that we walk with God and please Him, that we move in fear, setting the Lord before us.

This is testimony. This is what

God requireth at our hands, not as the demand of a task-master, but as our offering of love. This is what really tells on the conscience of others for God. It is of practical value; and nice words without it, are but as counterfeit coin, which looks well, but is worth nothing.

It is comparatively easy to get "knowledge," and to increase it; but, ah! it is hard to *walk with God*. It is coming out of self, and walking in the power of communion with another. The natural way is to follow our own will; it is the natural way since Adam fell—he begat a son in his own likeness. The bent of the will may often, to man's eye, be innocent or rational—"the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Our first parents would be wise; but it was wisdom by their own will, wisdom without God. They turned from the tree of life, and it was God's wisdom. (Prov. iii. 13—

18.) Their will was to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and this was Satan's suggestion. Whenever there is not subjection to God, there is the old apostacy that turned Adam out of paradise, and gave Satan his power in the world.

The object of our life should be testimony for God. With the Apostle this seemed the object in life and death. (Phil. i. 20.) But we cannot truly testify, save as we walk with God, save as we are in communion with Him. How important, then, to keep this communion uninterrupted. Yet with many daily interruptions to communion, what should we do? All would be lost, if there were not some way of restoration; and this we find God has provided, in the advocacy of the Righteous One, founded on His own propitiation. (1 John ii. 1, 2.) This alone can suffice us before God, or silence the accusation of the Adversary. Satan could find failure enough in the most perfect walk of

any saint, whereof to accuse him ; *there is none in the blood of the Lamb* —that which opens, and keeps open, communion to us. Here, let us take our stand, resting in the work of Jesus, and, in the spirit of adoption, crying Abba, Father, let us live as witnesses for Him “ who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

There is much, very much called, or supposed to be, “ testimony,” that after all is not testimony. In true testimony, our object should be, “ by manifestation of the truth,” both in word and life, “ to commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the *sight of God.*” If this be so, whatever our lot with men, we shall please God ; and that is enough.

Let us keep in view that there may be great intellectual power at work on the things of God, and yet no testimony. God may use the intellect which originally is of Him, and then have we cause to bless Him for it ;

but let us see that it is brought down in humbleness and teachableness under the power of God's Spirit; without this, the greater the intellect, the greater the power of evil.

It is perfectly fearful to see man's mere mind at work on God's word, in proud independence, venturing on the depths which no human line can fathom,—driving along in the assertion of a power in itself, without reference to that power without which no man knoweth the things of God. Hence the flippancy we see in some, when speaking of the things of God, that manifests the mere intimacy of the flesh. Where the Spirit is present, there will be the holy fear, the meekness and lowliness, which mark the unction of the Holy One, and which come with power to our souls.

One kind of service to which testimony very specially belongs, and in which we often see the power of communion, is evangelizing. We

may see one go out to preach the gospel, making his statements with much truth and clearness ; and yet there may be little or no testimony to the conscience, or acknowledgment of God in it. How is this ? It is from the want of the manifestation of God—" God is love." If, in communion with God, you can shew God's love to the soul of the poor sinner, there is testimony—that which he wants. Man's mind may be amused with abstract truth, but the poor, miserable sinner wants rest for his soul ; and where can he get this, except in the knowledge that God is love, and in the provision which love has made for him ? The true power of an evangelist, his special qualification, therefore, should be a heart overflowing with the love of God, and telling, out of its fulness, of that love which is all to him. Therefore, again, you find many an one, without any high power of mind, or capability of great clearness of statement, yet acknow-

ledged of God abundantly in his simple message of love. Love is God's great instrument in effecting His work. "God is love;" and if we walk in love, we walk in God, and our joy is in love. Love is a holy, happy thing: we know it now, in communion; we shall know it in perfection, in the glory. Oh, how happy is the communion and confidence of love! This would be true testimony, *the manifestation of love*; it is what God would acknowledge, for it is of Himself, and it is the testimony that we should give in the world, in all our conversation. There will be but little in bare abstract truth, except testimony for our own opinions. Such is not the way that God gives us truth—He clothes it *in love*—He manifests it in the gift of His only begotten Son. "Herein is the love."

Another point in which we probably mistake as to testimony, is making it to consist in things in which it

properly does not consist. Thus in zeal for a particular "church" or party, for particular views and doctrines set out of their proportion, and for peculiarities, personal or domestic, their very eccentricities, and the exact order or disorder of their service, are matters of testimony with some ; but such testimony is, at best, a waste of strength. What is worse, there is often a proneness to judge others who cannot see with us in these things. But when we are walking in communion with God, and our souls are happy in Him, we shall make comparatively light of such things ; the Lord Himself and His beloved people will occupy our hearts and thoughts, and there will be but little of judgment, except it be on ourselves. To judge, or to slight or stumble one of God's little ones will be abhorrent to us, as we realise fellowship with the Father and the Son ; in truth, the judgment even of open sin in the believer, will be

sorrowful work to one who is walking with God.

As to matters of private observance, let every one be satisfied before God, but let him not judge his brother; let each one see that in what he does, as well as what he does *not*, it is *unto the Lord*. But let us carefully watch herein against wilfulness in our doings,—that it is not our own will or pleasure, but the good will of our God that we are following. When we differ as to this, we have indeed cause to be humbled; but let us bear with one another, even as God bears with us, and be watchful, as every difference opens a door to the enemy.

I notice these things, affectionately to warn against them, as not in the Spirit, or after the example of our Lord and Master. What freedom from every thing one-sided or eccentric in Him! His peculiarity was that, alone, of entire subjection to His Father's will.

The Christian is called into liberty and not into bondage. The religion of the flesh gendereth to bondage ; let us stand in our blessed liberty, but watch that it is not made a cover for any evil, or desire of the flesh in ourselves, or a stumbling block to others. We may quite recognise the liberty which allows others to do many things which we cannot, or to omit doing things which seem well to us ; only, let us in love watch that we judge not nor offend one another ; our liberty is not to be judged or regulated by each other's conscience, but by God's word.

Again, we ought to value before the Lord any sacrifice that is made *unto Him*, and not to the poor consistency of our own notions. Indeed there is nothing, however little it be, which is done *unto our God* that will be lost upon Him—the cup of cold water shall have its reward. Man may forget, but He is not “unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.” How gracious, how wonderfully gracious ! that

God, so to speak, should tax his own righteousness for the remembrance of our little doings, mixed up as they are with so much of self and unworthiness!

The remedy, when we fail, is in restored communion—the remedy for every evil is with God. In communion we abide with Him; there we walk with Him; then there is testimony—power in our words and life; not a power of man, but the unction of the Holy One. We are instructed as to our inquiries into the will of the Lord, by the question of the apostles Peter and Paul. Peter, in the mere inquisitiveness of the heart, and it may be in the anxiety for his friend, but without any respect for God's glory, asks, "Lord, and what shall *this man* do?" and he is met by the reproof, "What is that to thee? Follow *thou* me." Here is what is of practical moment to the disciple, "Follow *thou me*;" and on this should all his knowledge and attainment bear. When Paul, on the contrary, is struck to the ground

on his journey to Damascus, what is his first word? "Lord, what wilt Thou have *me to do*?" Here is no inquisitiveness, and hence no reproof; here is the true and earnest desire to know the Lord's will, and consequently it is met with the gracious reply, "It shall be told thee what thou shalt do." So it is, virtually, at this present day with ourselves. Though there be no manifestation or audible voice, as of old, yet is the same principle true. If our search after truth be merely to gratify the inquisitiveness of our mind; if it be in the wrong spirit that would lay every thing under contribution to our knowledge—not that we may follow the Lord more truly, but to feed the pride of our hearts—then shall we know the reproof of the Lord; in our souls we shall feel it—"What is that to thee?" There will be, amid all, leanness within. But if we ask in trueness of heart; if our object be not in any way to minister

to the flesh, but to know our Lord's will, that we may do it; assuredly "it *shall* be told us." Dispensations may change, but God does not change; and we shall ever find Him true to them that are true to Him. If in our walk we acknowledge Him, then He will acknowledge us; but if, while His name is on our lips, some form of evil is in our hearts, what have we to expect but the rebuke of the Lord? To man we may seem to gather—and we may gather something whereof to talk, or make a fair show in the flesh—but we do not gather blessing to our own souls.

If we would walk with God amid the abounding evil, then must we be on our watch-tower against the deceitfulness of our hearts and the devices of the enemy; we must see that God is our object,—that we set the Lord before us, in all we put our hand to. Specially must we watch against the self-will that is native to our hearts, that leads us away from God, that

would fight against Him. A single act of self-will brought all the sin and misery that we witness, into the world ; and but a single act, if it were not for God's mercy, would for ever exclude us from His presence,—would lead us into the depths of misery and darkness. The subjection of a poor blind papist, evil as it is, is not so evil a thing as the assertion of right and self-will in those possessing knowledge or making high pretensions to it : the one is superstitious, and this is bad enough ; the other is rebellion, and that is worse. Who possesses the knowledge that Satan has?—but his is knowledge in self-will against God.

In fine, if we would be happy in our souls, and if in our lives we could give testimony for the Lord, let us *walk with God* ; and that we do so, let us watch that our communion be not hindered. If it be, we have seen the remedy—the blood and the Advocate ; let us renew it in this provision which His love has made.

To walk with God is in fact the very sum and substance of our religion ; it is the manifestation of our secret communion ; every thing will be right with us in spirit while we so walk. Knowing that many things daily arise to hinder us in this walk, we must be sober, watchful, circumspect : this will be bitter to the flesh ; but the fruit will be sweet. When we mortify the flesh as we discover it, then is the mind subject to God, and then we hinder not the Holy Spirit ; but it is hard. True, every thing good is hard—self-will has made it so ; but our God has laid nothing upon us, for which He does not supply the help. The cross is hard, but Jesus bore it before us ; and as we know the power of the cross, we get above self-will and are brought into subjection, which is the door of blessing. Self-will is the unholy root of all the evil ; and there is no remedy for it but the cross.

If we feel these things, if we are

made to groan under them, let us look to Jesus. See His full sympathy with human sorrow at the grave of Lazarus — “*Jesus wept.*” There, His heart is opened to us, He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. But follow Him a little further, and mark his first words in resurrection, “*Woman, why weepest thou?*” He is now no longer weeping over human misery, but drying up the tears which human misery has caused to flow. Unto *the woman* it was said at the first (Gen. iii.) “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow;” but now unto *the woman*, Jesus saith, “Why weepest thou?” Sorrow had taken the place of joy in this world, for *self-will* had come in, and death had followed; but now, old things have past away, and it is no longer *self-will*, and sin, and death. ONE has been found to pass through this world without any will, save the will of God; and this was the One to bear our sin and sorrow, even unto death.

Now there is a new thing—Death has given place to Resurrection: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.” Here is the drying of the woman’s tears — “Why weepest thou?” Oh, what a word of blessedness! oh, what a return of love, after all our self-will and rebellion! —“Why weepest thou?” The old things have passed away, death has given place unto life, and sorrow to joy; and the joy of the Lord is our strength. Here is our provision, our strength to walk with the Lord in holy communion,—it is in the power of a new, a risen life. What do we want more, but more truth of heart, more faith to prove these things? Oh, may we know them; not only by the hearing of the ear, not as having thoughts about them; but in deep and happy exercise of soul, as taught by God’s Spirit! The dearest child of God, when out of communion, may be doing Satan’s work; aye, more

than an unconverted man. There may even be more difficulty in dealing with him when in the flesh than with an unconverted person, in those points where he will have his way, or where one consideration or another will hinder his subjection to God.

Let us see that there be no reserves ; that in every-thing *self-will* be brought down, whatever it may cost us. Could we but see what blessing it hinders, and what power it gives to the enemy, it would, I believe, terrify us to think that it has *any place*, however little, in our hearts. If we walk out of communion, whatever show of service there may be, (and in such cases there is often *doing, doing*, to try and satisfy the conscience,) yet there is no true testimony for God. It is in communion there is testimony. It is in communion we can say, in blessed consciousness of its truth, " We have the mind of Christ." It is in communion that, raised above this sad world

—its poor and passing concerns, its pride and vanity, the mists which Satan would raise to bewilder us—we *walk with God* ; we look down upon it all,—we can afford to lose it, or be nothing in it ; for in communion, we know Jesus, in the power of His resurrection. God give us more to *prove* these things, and, day by day, as we pass along and work out His holy will, to rise in the power of the Spirit of Him “ who was dead, but is alive again,”—to be obedient to what He has taught us, to be doers of *His will* and not of *our own*.

May we learn more earnestly to *please God*, more simply to *walk with Him*, and thus give testimony to the truth in our day and generation.

“NO MORE CONSCIENCE OF SIN.”

Hebrews x.

THE object of redemption is to bring us nigh to God, as it is written, “Christ hath once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” But what is our state before God when thus brought nigh? The right understanding of this is most important. It is impossible that we could be happy even in the presence of God, if there still existed a thought of His being against us. I need the perfect, settled assurance that there is no sin upon me before Him. The sense of responsibility ever makes a person unhappy where there is any question as to sin standing against him: see the case of a servant and his master, or that of a child and its parent,—the conscience is miserable if there be upon it the sense of that which will be judged. So God’s presence

THE HEBREW SERVANT.

Ex. xxi. 1—7.

I DESIRE to consider a little the service of the saints of God.

It is a blessed thing to serve God at all, for we are unable to do so naturally; if a thought of service ever enters our hearts it is one of bondage—the service of a hard and austere master. This is one of the things which show how entirely man has departed from God. If we look at angels, those “angels who excel in strength,” they “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word;” “are they not all *ministering* spirits sent forth to *minister* for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” The highest angel is but in the place of a servant, yet it is a blessed thing to serve, and they bless God for it.

Every one has known how painful

the thought of service is to the natural heart; and unless we see that *service* is connected with *liberty*, such will always be the thought. That which redemption shows us is that we are *free*, yet free to *serve*; this is the fruit of redemption, that we are free to be the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the saints for his sake. If we did not know that we were free, we should only be seeking to serve ourselves; this will ever be the case until we know redemption, how God has saved us, and how Jesus is serving in heaven for us. The great thing for us to do, is, to look how the Lord Jesus served.

These verses (Ex. xxi. 1—7) are not properly a part of the covenant—"now these are the *judgments* that thou shalt set before them." In Ps. xix. 7—11, we get several distinct things mentioned—testimony, statutes, commandments, judgments; these last I apprehend to be God's decision on certain points—"the judgments of the

LORD are true and righteous altogether.”

The very first thing God has decided here, is a particular about *service* —“*If thou buyan Hebrew Servant.*” If he were a captive, he would be in the power of his master; but this judgment is concerning one under the law, an Hebrew servant: the Gentiles were never under the law, and I do not find this judgment brought into the New Testament, the Apostle Paul only gives direction of unqualified submission to the master, whether a believing or an unbelieving one; this judgment applies to those who are under the law, and not to those who are not under the law.

The Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us as “made of a woman,” and “made under the law.” As “made under the law” he “magnified it and made it honourable.” The law, that was “the letter which killeth” to all else, was not the letter that killeth to

him, it drew out the response from his heart, "I delight to do thy will, oh my God, yea thy law is within my heart." The application of the law to the heart of man only works out the enmity that is there; but there was no enmity in the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus having thus been made under the law, and fulfilled it entirely, shews that it was a most suitable thing for God to give; if there had been failure it was only in those to whom it was given, and not in the law itself; it was "weak through the flesh;" before God could put it aside, He must show that He had not dispensed a bad thing. The law has been removed by Christ, and thus he has made a free passage for God's love to come forth to us.

In another way I find the Lord Jesus presented as a faithful *servant*—
"Behold *my servant* whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him;

he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles" (Isa. xlii. 1); and again—"Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; the LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He hid me; and said unto me, thou art *my servant*, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Isa. xlix. 1, 2, 3). He is here brought before us as *the servant* of Jehovah, and so he constantly speaks of himself—"I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me," and that is just the *servant's* place,—the Lord Jesus Christ spoke as it were his Master's word.

"Being in the form of God, he

thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"—he humbled himself to become a servant, and blessed was it that he did so, for if he had come in his native dignity, he never could have said, "*I am among you as one that serveth,*" he never could have washed our feet. His native dignity, it is true, broke forth every now and then ; but the mystery of redemption is, that the eternal Son of the Father has become the *servant* of Jehovah, and the *servant* of our necessities. These are the things that angels desire to look into, that the prophets have enquired and searched diligently concerning, "the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow."

He was the "*Hebrew servant,*" and *the faithful servant* who had served his time unto Him, whose servant he came to be ; and he might have

said, now I can “go out free;” I have served my time, and I can “go out free” (verse 2); and indeed he did say, “Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” But he might have acted on this judgment and gone out himself.

All his service seemed in vain, as to any present result—“I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God” (Isa. xlix. 1). But what is the answer? “And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him; though Israel be not gathered, yet shall *I be glorious* in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength; and He said, it is a light thing that thou

shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" (verses 5, 6). All his service seemed to be thrown away. "Though he did so many miracles among them, yet they believed not." They said he was Beelzebub—the friend of publicans and sinners—and at last crucified him.

He "came in by himself," and he might have "gone out by himself," (verse 3). He was the only one who could ever have "*entered into life*" by keeping the commandments (I am speaking of him now in his mediatorial character—"there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus"); he had a *right* to enter into life. Law knew nothing about saving a person, it promised life through obedience to it; "the man that doeth these things shall live in them." The

Lord Jesus Christ alone had earned life by obedience in every jot and tittle of the law, and he might have "gone out free;" but he would not go out free, for the reason here assigned.— "If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters, the wife and the children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, *I love my master, my wife, and my children*, I will not go out free; then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him for ever" (verses 4, 5).

When Jesus on his rejection by the chief priests and pharisees (John xii. 10—19) heard of the desire of the Greeks to see him, he said, "the hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the

ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." He was the only grain of principal wheat. Had he not died he would have remained alone, precious in himself, but he would have borne no fruit.—He might have "gone out free," but it would have been *by himself*. He might have "entered into life," but it would have been *alone*. He would not therefore, but he became obedient unto death, that he might "see of the travail of his soul;" that he might "bring many sons unto glory"—that he might have his wife and children. This was a voluntary act—though free, he was free *to serve*; he is the One who has come and had his ear bored that he might serve for ever.

I desire to look at this a little more. The Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is there still as *the servant*; and when coming out in glory by and bye, he will be still as *the servant*.

I need not tell you how that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks of himself in a subject character, and that this is voluntary. He came not in His own name, but in the name of Him who sent him. They would have taken him by force and made him a king (John vi.), but he would not be a king in their name or in his own. As *Jehovah's servant*, he was *His king* also; and as they would not own him as coming from God, he would not be owned at all. We receive him not, unless we receive him as *the Christ of God*.

In verse 5 we read, "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master." O *how plainly* did he say it when he cried, "If it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not *as I will*, but *as thou wilt!*" The servant is one who does not his own will. It was the love that Jesus had to Him that sent him that brought him down into death, as he says, "therefore does

my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again; this commandment have I received of my Father." Beloved, we are sanctified by his having done the will of Him that sent him—"by the which will we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He said, "*Lo I come to do thy will*"—I'll do His will, cost me what it may. He was free to go to "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was;" but he would not go out free. "I love my master, my wife, and my children," I will not go out free. It was love that actuated Jesus in his work on the cross.

I find in that aspect Jesus doing the will of Jehovah; in another place Jehovah's sword awaking "against the man his fellow." In one sense the death of Jesus on the cross is the "*burnt-offering*," a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour; in another the

“*sin-offering*” which was to be burnt outside the camp.

The heart of Jesus could not be satisfied unless he had his wife and children with him where he was, and therefore he must carry his service down into the depths of death—“*If his master have given him a wife.*” The bride *is given* to Jesus, just as God gave Adam a wife. I can never separate the love of the Father in this, *the gift* of the Church by him to Jesus, and the love of Jesus for the Church in giving himself for it. So it is with the sheep (John x.), they are *the gift* of the Father to Jesus; and Jesus, as the good Shepherd, has laid down his life for them. If he love his wife, he must serve for her. Well, Jacob served for a wife *a long service*, but the Lord Jesus *serves for ever*; he is the constant minister unto the Church, as he has won her,—as he has died for her, so he serves her now.

And so with the children—“*I love*

my children”—“ behold I and the children whom God hath given me.” Because he loved the wife, because he loved the children he serves for ever.

In his personal service when here, he was the servant of every body, he was always going about doing good, but ever so in the Father’s name. Shortly before going out of the world we see (John xii.) that “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end; and supper being ended, the devil having now put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself; after that he poureth water into a bason and began to wash the disciples’ feet.” We find him doing the most servile act. It was the *service* of love, and how did his love make him stoop?

If I were asked, is Jesus serving now? yes, washing his disciples' feet. "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you, the example of his own willing service to the Church; a pattern indeed to us, but a specimen of what his service is, now we are walking through this weary filthy world. We need to have our feet washed, and Christ does this by his priestly ministry for us. He still retains the place of ministry and service, to which he has bound himself from love to his master, love to his wife, love to his children. But surely he is still our Lord and Master; we can call him Lord, own him as Lord, pray to him as Lord, and thus see that the One who "upholdeth all things by the word of his power" is the very One who daily *ministers* to our necessities. He has had his ear

bored to the door-post—he is a *servant for ever*. I find the Lord of glory is able to *serve*. He does not need to be served Himself; people always think that God needs to be served, instead of seeing the wondrous thing that He wishes to serve us.

In Luke xii. we find that still this service is carried on when the Lord Jesus Christ comes forth in glory; “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall *gird himself*, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and *serve them*.” No one will be able to deny his Sonship then, his Godhead then; but even there he is still *the servant*; I do not mean to explain

how, I only carry forward the thought of service. It will be our blessed place to serve him; yet still it is our security to know that he will serve us. He still delights to sustain that character into which he voluntarily came.

We get from this decision of the LORD the principle of service. In this day, when many saints are awaking to a desire of service, there is a danger of getting off the ground of *grace*. We are all apt to make the connection between service and glory, instead of seeing that the connection is between grace and glory. The blood is our title to glory, even as it has saved us, —even as it has redeemed us. I see in the countless multitude who surround the throne, that they are there because of “the blood of the Lamb.”

The servant always hides himself, puts himself aside, that the master may appear; the great danger in any service we are able to render, is lest the servant should appear. Simon

Magus gave himself out as some great one ; but if we serve according to this judgment, it will be very unobtrusive service. Joshua was servant to Moses—he abode in the tabernacle outside the camp (Ex. xxxiii. 11), but how little prominently does he appear. Joshua is hid, and Moses is the actor.

Our place of service will ever be, in God's wisdom, the place of trial, though the place of comfort too. So was it with the Lord, he did always the things that pleased the Father, and thus proved his love ; but he had to set his face like a flint. Our service is not occasional but continuous. If we are in the place of servants, it is because we are sons. The ear is to be "opened morning by morning." Domestic duties are to be taken up as service to the Lord,—He is to be glorified in them : the service we mostly fail in is domestic piety. Many would desire more time for serving the Lord. But why not make *all we do* service

to him—"ye serve the Lord Christ."

The principle of our service is love to the master. Paul says, "for though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all."—I may "go out free," but "I love my master," and *therefore* I'll serve them. It is the service of love and not obligation. "We are," it is true, "not our own, we are bought with a price; therefore let us glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are His." But the Lord does not address us with that claim: he says, "*if ye love me, keep my commandments.*" God loveth a cheerful giver, because He is a cheerful giver. Some persons say, oh, I wish I could serve the Lord more. Well, let your soul enter more deeply into His love, and then you will serve Him,—it is impossible to love Him and not to serve Him; but it may be a service of a kind which we do not like, because we too often serve to exalt ourselves. The Lord

said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." "Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty, only use not that liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." The moment I come with a claim, I damp the main-spring of service; it is *by love* we are to *serve one another*. I do believe that this ought to be my feeling,—I am a debtor to every saint, because the Lord, by His grace, has made me free—free indeed.

When the saints are in glory by and bye, it will be still to *serve*, to *minister* to the world as well as to the Lord—"His servants shall serve Him." Just as angels serve now, so by and bye there will be the visible ministry of saints.

How blessedly has love been the servant to our necessities—how has God in His love given His Son for us—how has Jesus served us—how does He still serve us—how will he serve us by and bye. The active

spring of service in the Church ought to be *love*. May we trace in Jesus the exhibition of it. What a blessed thing it is to serve—may we serve not in self-will, but doing His will. Service in the Church will never make us of any esteem among men, it did not make *the perfect servant* so; but still the word was, “he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high” (Isa. lii. 13). And what a blessed thought,—what a thought of grace, to hear one mourning over his unprofitableness and wretched service, addressed in these words in the day of the glory, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

May the Lord grant us, beloved, deliverance from law service, and lead us to happy blessed service, according to this judgment of the Hebrew servant.

“THE LAST WORDS OF DAVID,”

2 Sam. xxii.—xxiii. 1—7.

THERE is a remarkable contrast between the two songs in these chapters,—the song of David after he had done with *all his enemies*, that is, after his trials by Saul, and the song of David after he had done *with himself*—here brought together by the Spirit of God.

At the end of his *trials*, when looking back at his enemies, he sings of joy and triumph—all is exultation. After his experience of the *blessing*, it is, “Although my house be not so with God.” The end of all the sorrow and trial with Saul, is rejoicing, exultation, and strength.—“The waves of death had compassed him, the floods of ungodly men made him afraid, the sorrows of hell compassed him about, and the snares of death prevented him; yet—the result of all

Here is their centre, their sphere, and their rest—the glory of Jesus.

The practical effect of all this upon our hearts and consciences, is to throw us into the first part of the history of David. Be it in what it may, if we are faithful in singleness of eye in the camp of Saul, we shall soon find ourselves in the cave of Adullam, taking as the portion of our souls fellowship in Christ's sufferings. It is there we shall have all the unfoldings of those internal affections, those secret affections of heart, which were developed in David when humble. It was when David was a partaker beforehand of the sufferings and afflictions of Christ in the cave of Adullam, hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, that he was compassed about with songs of deliverance.

The Lord give us singleness of eye, and in the power of his resurrection, to have fellowship with his sufferings.

RUIN AND REDEMPTION.

1 PET. I. 17—25.

WHAT is man's real condition before God?—He knows it not. But this is the great preliminary question, ere he can be brought under the ministry of the *grace* of God.

The very ground necessarily assumed, before preaching the gospel of God's grace, is that every man is a lost and ruined sinner. God has asserted it, (Rom. iii. 10—23). And if we come to practical Christianity, it is equally an axiom, that the great ground of Christian action, is *redemption* security.

The point at issue between God and every soul, is, whether man is as bad as God's testimony says he is; for the starting post in preaching the gospel, is God's declaration—“*All flesh is grass.*” Take man in every state of

moral and intellectual improvement, and—he is “grass.” “All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass” (a much more fleeting thing than the grass itself.) “The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.”

Job was a man remarkable for integrity and uprightness, according to God’s own declaration:—‘Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a *perfect* and an *upright* man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.’ But, when he comes to stand before God, it is, ‘I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee, *wherefore* I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ Here Job learnt that, as flesh, he was “grass.”

Whenever a plea is made for the flesh, for any thing merely human, whether righteousness, wisdom, or strength, the plea cannot be established except by condemning God! The Lord

had said, when speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, "Wilt thou *condemn me*, that *thou* mayest be *righteous*."

In seeking to bring the testimony concerning truth and grace before the conscience, I would not take the dregs of humanity, to prove that "all flesh is grass"—here, in the first instance, you have *righteous Job*.

Again—Solomon was a remarkable specimen of a person blessed of God in various ways, but principally in having wisdom *given* to him—the *gift* of wisdom directly from God, (see 1 Kings iii. iv.)

"God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men. . . . And there came of all people to hear the *wisdom* of Solomon, from all kings of the

earth, which had heard of his wisdom." His experience ended in this—"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold *all is vanity and vexation of spirit*. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered....For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow."—*All vanity and vexation of spirit!* "*All flesh is grass!*"

Again—as to *religious man*. If any really think that religion consists in doing this, or doing that, the Pharisee was more religious than any of us. The era of our Lord's ministry on earth was a most religious era; and yet, when our Lord Jesus Christ came seeking *fruit*, he could not find any. He was cast out and murdered, *because* they maintained *their* religion.

Hence we see that human righteousness, human wisdom, and human religion, are all hindrances in the way

of knowing God really as He is, and ourselves as we are. One of the most genuine marks of true conversion to God, is the utter and entire denial of any goodness in ourselves, or expectation from ourselves.

Man, as an intellectual and moral creature, is now putting forth all his powers to establish that, concerning which God says, it is "grass." Modern philanthropists are seeking to raise and cultivate man's intellect. They may succeed above all their expectations, but no philanthropic society or effort for the amelioration of man, however honest the intention, can meet the ruin of the condition in which man is before God, because it falls short of the cross. It can do nothing but leave man as it found him, a ruined sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, unaltered before God, knowing nothing of Him, or what it is to have thoughts and desires in communion with Him, and in a world as ruined as himself.

Every man by nature *is* a lost and ruined sinner, and he *is in* a lost and ruined world. It is quite necessary to state these things together, in order to know what *salvation* is.

What was salvation before the flood? It was to be in the ark, because the world was going to be judged.

What was salvation in the days of Lot? To get out of Sodom, because Sodom was going to be burned.

And what is salvation now? Not merely to be saved from hell—that it is; but it is also “deliverance from this present evil world.”

Persons may be *reformed*, and yet *not be converted*. I do not like the expression, “a converted character;” conversion is the being turned from every thing, whatever it may be, and brought to God.

What is God’s testimony now to man thus ruined, and in a ruined world, but testimony unto His own grace, and His own power, to His

ability to meet man in such circumstances, in a way that nothing but grace could provide. The Apostle says, 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' It is impossible to be the subject of God's power without effects following. Christ is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto us which are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.' This may be a puerility to the present age, as it was to the Greeks, to men who are seeking wisdom; a stumbling-block to those requiring a sign, as to the Jews; but unto those who believe, Christ is "the *power* of God and the *wisdom* of God."

The same God that hath told us that "*all flesh is grass,*" the same God who, after long experience of man, has

said '*flesh profiteth nothing*,' is now sending forth His testimony unto salvation through "*the precious blood of Christ*." He is not any longer testing man, beloved. In that sense, there is not *now* a state of probation for ruined sinners. They have been tried, under the best and most favourable circumstances, in Israel, under the law, and found wanting. The Son of the living God has come, and found man "dead in trespasses and sins." Man, therefore, is pronounced as bad as he can be—utterly ruined.

But grace would never be known as it is, if it could not meet a sinner "dead in trespasses and sins." This was exhibited in the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was here the expression of grace and truth; it was thrown in his teeth by the self-righteous Pharisee, that he was receiving publicans and sinners!

Man is more angry with God for meeting ruined sinners in *grace*, than

for dealing with them in *righteousness*. Grace is the one thing he cannot understand. Human wisdom cannot grasp that word; it can understand law, but that God should be dealing in *grace* with poor lost sinners—the human understanding cannot grasp *that*. You will find, if you test your hearts, that you naturally hate grace a great deal more than you hate holiness. *Well, grace meets the sinner just where he is, in all his misery and ruin; the love of God meets him there.* Each one of us, who have received Christ into our own souls, can give our amen to that. We were loved by God, not when we had improved ourselves, but, when we were dead in trespasses and sins. “God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

What is it which enables God thus to have to do in grace with poor lost sinners? “*The blood of the Lamb.*” —“F’or as much as ye know that ye

were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: but with the *precious blood of Christ*, as of a *Lamb* without blemish and without spot: who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”—It is *the blood of the Lamb* which enables the *holy* God to meet *unholy* sinners, it fills up the amazing gap between the throne of God and them, as lost and ruined sinners. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

And this after man had proved that there was no response in his heart to the love of God. Had there been a spark of good in him, it would have been

called out by the Lord Jesus Christ.—But no, the answer to all his love and grace was—‘Away with him! away with him! crucify him! crucify him!’

Man has preferred a murderer to Jesus—‘*not* this man, *but* Barabbas!’ nay, God’s Son *has been murdered!* And now the ministry of reconciliation is granted to that world *where* He was murdered. God’s answer to all the hard thoughts of man’s heart is,—‘*I* have given you my Son.’ His answer to all man’s pretensions—‘*You* have *crucified* my Son.’ It is always of strengthening power to my own soul, to see that when God begins, He begins with those who crucified His own Son! What a blessed thing to find, that from among the very murderers of Jesus a number were brought to know God’s love through the blood of His Son.

The gospel to us is the proclamation of the value, not only of the *person* of Jesus, but of the *blood* which has been shed. God’s controversy with

man therefore is—what estimate have you of His Son, and of the *blood* that He has shed. You cannot be neutral,—‘he that is not *with* me is *against* me.’ But it matters not what your thoughts are, God’s thoughts and the thoughts of *all redeemed* sinners is—that there is nothing so “precious” as the blood of God’s own Son.

The *blood* of Christ not only brings God down in grace to us, it brings us up to God. “Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” A ruined sinner washed in the blood of Jesus, is immediately brought into the presence of God. All the great things of God are very simple. By one and the same blood a sinner who believes in Jesus, is washed from his sins, justified, and brought nigh to God! In the glory the theme of the redeemed will be, “*the blood of the Lamb*”—‘Thou hast redeemed us unto God by *thy blood* out of every kindred and tongue, and people

and nation.'—'Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in *His own blood* and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.'

What becomes a person so "washed from his sins," "redeemed," and "brought unto God?" Here we find the importance of his seeing his position in the Head. He is redeemed as he fell; he fell in one, he is redeemed in one—in a Head; "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." We are *in* Him as the *Risen One*, and derive from Him new life, a new nature conversant with a new sphere of things—new affections—a new world. The redeemed man is brought into a new creation with Jesus, and all those who are redeemed by Him unto God.

This is a remedy *worthy* of God. It is that which the apostles preached, "Jesus and the resurrection." Deny

grace, and you deny the wisdom of God.

Were man redeemed merely to be brought into a moral system, then remedial associations might effect the object; but he is *dead*, and *wants life*, and men are seeking the improvement of that world which is *stained* with the *blood* of Jesus, for which He will make inquisition by and bye. If I am giving myself to philanthropy—a thing which would be very well if man were to be improved for a social system here—I am denying his ruin and that of the world. In this we see the deceiving power of Satan. The Church should not be deceived by him—he is the *accuser of the brethren*; but the *deceiver of the whole world*.

GROWTH
THROUGH THE TRUTH.1 PET. II. 1—6.

IN one sense, as here taught us by the Spirit of God through the Apostle, the healthful position of the saint is ever that of the "*new-born babe*;" whilst in another sense we are, of course, to be making progress, so as to become young men and fathers in Christ. As to practical position of soul in receiving truth from God, it is that of the "*new-born babe*"—"as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." This is the place in which, as believers, we are set by the Spirit, in order that we may grow up into Christ.

But if we are "to grow by the sincere milk of the word," it is not by the exercise of our minds upon the word, nor yet even by great study of it merely; we need the teaching of the Holy Spirit,

Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves,—we are entitled to forget our sins,—we are entitled to forget all but Jesus. It is by looking unto Jesus that we can give up any thing, that we can walk as obedient children,—His love constrains us. Were it simply a command, we should have no power to obey.

The Lord give us thus to be learners of the fulness of grace which is in Jesus, the beloved and elect one of God, so that “we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

May we, beloved, in searching into the truth of God, “*having tasted that the Lord is gracious,*” ever be found “*as new-born babes, desiring the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.*”

TRUTH AND LOVE.

1 & 2 JOHN.

THERE is a peculiar rest to the heart in meditating on St. John's writings. For in them God in the grace of the Father and the Son seems to shine immediately on the poor sinner; and though all committed to man may have failed, yet in Jesus there is a something (and that the true eternal good) out-living all wreck and failure. The world is a ruin, we know; but the Church in the world is a ruin also. Nothing can touch or even soil her, as "the LAMB's wife." But as responsible to God on the earth, like as the garden of Eden was lost when in man's hand, and the inheritance of Israel was lost when in man's hand, so do I believe the Church is gone also. All is safe in Christ, to be manifested in due time, but man holds nothing.

Now the comfort of the soul in reading John is this—that he does not contemplate the Church as the Lord's "candlestick." Paul does. He looks at it at Corinth, at Philippi, and elsewhere—and we may have to grieve, when reading his epistles to *Churches*, that things are not in the same ecclesiastical power, and order, and grace, that they once were. And such grief is holy, if it be in the measure of the mind of God, who has provided the relief for all this. But John does not call forth that grief, for he does not look at things ecclesiastical, but at things personal. He deals with the sinner and the saint in immediate personal connection with God; and thus deals with truths which are independent of all ecclesiastical outward state.

From this I do feel and judge that there is peculiar rest to the soul in meditating with St. John upon God's revelations. Because we must, in the present state of things, be conscious of

sad disorder. But Jesus as *Saviour* survives, the *sinner* still lives, and consciously has his being in our very selves, and there can be a meeting between the Saviour and the sinner—happy, restoring, satisfying, though the light of the “candlestick” be gone; there can be a learning of the secrets of the Father and of the Son by the renewed mind, in the power of the *Holy Ghost*, who still also survives in the consciousness of our new man within, though again I may say, the light of the “candlestick” is no more.

Thus St. John meets very much the desire of the poor wearied saint now-a-days. He rises upon the soul to tell it there is something better, something more enduring, something even giving a brighter light than any “candlestick.” And as this is the character of the message he bears to the soul, as it is of the Father, the Word, and the Comforter he speaks, and as they live and shine still for the poor sinner,

though all else may have failed him, so the perfect stillness of the soul is that attitude in which his message is to be listened to. The soul to be silent, and let the Lord pass by, revealing Himself. He will publish His own name, and what has the soul to do but, like Moses, to remain in the appointed "clift of the rock?" It is God himself who has risen. Let the shoes of a busy talkative mind be taken off, for the place is a sanctuary where *God* is to be seen and heard. It is unto God that the Spirit by St. John would conduct the soul. And as the happiest human moments are enjoyed when a tide of influences or of affections is rolling on, and the soul has nothing to do, but to stoop and let it roll on, and spend itself upon us—so our seasons of meditation on these precious divine oracles should have the savour of the like joy. God in His fulness has risen, and our joy is to look and to listen, to be, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus, simply *receivers*,

drinking in the rain from such a heaven. For strikingly has it been said by another, "*Mercy* has now an unlimited vent towards the redeemed, as *justice* once had the like upon the Redeemer."

And I may add, there is much of the *family* of God in St. John. This also makes his witness very grateful to the affections of the renewed mind, to the thoughts of the saint, wearied, as I have said, with anxieties and searching about the *Church* of God. John does not contemplate the saints in their formed and ordered condition as a "Church," but in their more free character, as members or children of the family. Thus he addresses his first epistle, not to any body as a Church, but "to children, young men, and fathers." And his second and third to private persons.

This has much struck me before now, while meditating on St. John. But ere we speak a little of his second and third epistles, as I proposed to do,

I would take leave to add a little further here.

The dealings of the blessed God in this world of ours have more simplicity of purpose than we imagine. We have to look at God passing from one dispensation to another—yet in all, we are taught, that there is but one purpose before Him, and that is, to manifest Himself in richest blessings, in love and mercy to poor sinners, unto His own eternal glory.

When the Saviour commented on all that had gone before His ministry, he said, “My Father worketh hitherto.” There we are let into the secret of the purpose of God. He came forth in the law to test what was in us; yet “*our Father*” had a deeper purpose than that—one with which His heart mixed itself. Mount Sinai was never the place of the *Father’s* ministry: Moses and the angels might work in Sinai; but deeper than all, “*my Father*” wrought, said Jesus. Though a little

hid under a large and more public thing—yet the mind of Christ coming to apply itself to all that had gone on before, He said, “My Father worketh hitherto.” This lets the soul into this: that God from the beginning had been working in *grace*. The operation of the *Father* is another mode of expressing God working in grace. Here we get the unity of the Divine design, from the beginning to the end, to be this—to bring Himself out to us poor sinners as “the Father of mercies.” Whether He be manifested to us as destined for earthly or heavenly glory, it is still as “the Father of mercies” to poor broken-hearted sinners.

What is the gospel of St. John up to chap. x.? A trial whether man had learnt that secret—that the *Father* had been working hitherto. In chap. viii. we have the Lord’s mind brought out in contrast with the Jew on that point—“If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also.” Why did they

not receive Jesus? Because they had not been seeing the Father “working hitherto”—not learning God as poor broken-hearted sinners—not learning Him as *the Father*. If we do not learn Him in this character, we shall never learn Him aright.

What is the glory which passes before us in that gospel? “The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” This gospel of John is the passing of *that* glory across this ruined world of ours; but no eye of the children of men could discern it, save the eye of poor convicted sinners.

There are many signs of this throughout that gospel. It may shine in the world, may pass from scene to scene, but it is the eye of the poor conscious sinner, and of none else, that meets it; it is the conscious sinner alone that understands it, that is gladdened by it, and falls into the train of it. Thus when John says (ch. i.), “Behold the LAMB OF GOD!” Andrew follows Jesus

in that character, and the door of Jesus is opened to him. He had followed Jesus as the LAMB OF GOD—he had gone after the “glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” and if any follow Jesus as such, His door shall be open to them. Just follow Jesus as the “LAMB OF GOD,” and He opens His house, His heart, His glory. All opens to us at once. Nicodemus comes not so (chap. iii.), and he has to go back to the brazen serpent, and there get the faculty to apprehend the glory of the Father and the things of the kingdom.

In chap. iv. the poor Samaritans receive Him, and He goes and dwells with them for two days. In that village “the glory of the only begotten of the Father” could unbosom itself, because He was received in character. Where there was an eye that had learnt Jesus as the friend of sinners, there the glory could go. This is the way to receive Him in character, and all that Jesus

wants is to be thus received. We see the opposite to this in ch. ii. where He says, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He was shining in "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" and if His own mother could not see Him *in that glory* He had nought to do even with her.

So in chap. vii. his brethren are distanced from Him; for they looked at Him in a glory that suited the world; but in the next chapter, and again in the 9th, a convicted adulteress and a poor outcast excommunicated one, are brought and kept near Him; for they learnt Him in that glory which met their necessities as poor sinners.

Thus is it through these chapters. And it is comforting to our souls to keep the path of this glory before us. And in chap. x. we see this blessed Son of the Father, as the Shepherd full of grace in the midst of His flock—His flock of poor convicted, believing,

accepted sinners. And after all this we see this same one looking upward to the Father's house. For in chap. xiv. this glory of the only begotten of the Father, that had been thus shining down here to poor sinners for awhile, is going again to its place; and Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions—I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and *receive you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also." I rest on this promise of Jesus. When He comes again He will receive me unto Himself. Is there not *intimacy* here? It is the first hope to rest on the sinner's soul. He is gone to the Father's house until all are gathered; when every thing is ready He will come out to receive the children unto Himself—He "will come again to receive" these poor redeemed sinners UNTO HIMSELF—to meet them in the air, and then they will all go together to the FATHER'S HOUSE. This

is the immediate hope, beloved, of POOR SINNERS such as you and I.

This then, is the trial in John. It is the application of "the glory of the only begotten of the Father" to the eyes and consciences of men, to see if they would receive Him in that character.

St. Matthew opens in a *different style*; but the *same lesson* is taught.

In chap. v. we read, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This is in the style of Matthew, but in fullest moral harmony with St. John. One who had been learning law, learning God in terms of Mount Sinai, must have had thoughts altogether disturbed by such a word as this. In law, it was the *flesh* trying to meet the demands of Sinai; but now He has to say, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for *theirs* is the kingdom of God." There is no kingdom of God in the world that is not the kingdom of the Father. The law never furnished the kingdom; for it is to be furnished by

the Father with poor sinners. The lesson in Matthew and John is one and the same. Whether we be going on to the heavenly part of the kingdom now, or the Jew to the earthly by and bye, it is still the kingdom of the *Father*. It is the Father's kingdom from one end of it to the other, from the top to the foot of the hill; and none get into the kingdom, none become citizens of it, but those who, as Matthew speaks, are "the poor in spirit," or as St. John says, "are born again"—those who have learned Jesus as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

So again—"Ye are the salt of the earth, ye are the light of the world." I judge that the word of value here is "*ye*." After Jesus had shown the character of the kingdom, that it was such as was to be taken by the poor in spirit, (our only title to it—for none ever took it by violence but the Lord, and we as convicted sinners are cast

upon Him,) he entirely changes the character of “the light” and “the salt.” The light reflected from Sinai had been proposed to man if he could gather it; but now that which constitutes the “light of the world” is not Sinai light (the light of righteousness), but the light of the poor broken hearted sinner reflected from the glory of the Father. That which was proposed to man at Sinai he was unable to reflect; but what distinguishes us now is, that we are basking in the light of our Father, His beams shining on us—our poor souls advancing and beaming under the light of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. There we must go to season ourselves, there to illuminate ourselves,—“Salt” to season, “Light” to shine.

Again—“If thou bring thy gift unto the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be recon-

ciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." What is the value of this to our souls, beloved? Why that our Father will not value our offerings, as children and as worshippers, unless we are cultivating the affection of brethren; and this is quite as St. John says, "This commandment have we received from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also"—there is perfect harmony between them. Our Father is working to fill a kingdom with children and with brethren—with citizens who shall know *Him* as their *Father* and each other as *brethren*. This was the simple purpose from the beginning, and He ever secures it. He not only brings each to Himself in love as His child, but all to each other in the sweet relationship of brethren. If we be not hallowing the confidence of brethren, our worship cannot be accepted. Our God is jealous of the rights which we have to render to each other, that we maintain affection

amongst ourselves. He says, as it were, "You must come to *me* in the path of brotherly love, otherwise I cannot receive your gift; my *altar* is indeed among you, but I cannot receive your *gift* whilst you are without love to one another. If I see not my beloved family in order, my children in peace and love one with another, I cannot take my place amongst them." This is the gracious desire of the Father, the head of the family, "That he who loveth God love his brother also."

The Lord spoke what was familiar to His own soul from the beginning. In Eden, the Patriarchs, Noah, Abram, Sinai, this was always the thing, and the mind of Christ goes beneath all to bring it forth—to bring out this treasure, "My Father worketh hitherto." There is one simple, undistracted design from the beginning to end. Whether we enter into the heavenly or the earthly part of it, it is "*our Father's kingdom*"—a kingdom of children

and brethren; this is His precious design, and though all else may fail, this shall be accomplished. Love never fails, for God never fails. His gifts and callings are without repentance.

Now these two epistles of John come in the train, in harmony with all this; and this too is the value of the book of Revelation. We may differ in our measure of attainment in the understanding of it; but we can *together* discern this precious feature there, *all* may agree in this joy, that though at the very beginning of the book, the “candlestick,” the public witness for God, may be gone, yet to the very end of the book, “the Bride, the LAMB’S wife,” *remains*, as indeed I have already noticed. She may be put to shame in her stewardship, but as the beloved, the chosen of and for the LAMB, she stands for ever, she survives all. So in these epistles. I see all else gone, save that which can never go—that which is established in the grace

of God—in the love of the Father. Every thing may fail, but the purpose of God before the foundation of the world can never fail.

II. EPISTLE.

Verses 1, 2. That truth which dwelleth in us, the gospel truth—that which reveals “the only begotten of the Father”—that truth shall never go, it shall be with us for ever. It is that precious seed which has constituted us, poor sinners, children of the kingdom, “that word which by the gospel is preached unto you,” and it “liveth and abideth for ever.”

Verse 3. Here the peculiar spirit of St. John shows itself. Paul says, in addressing the Churches, “Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ;” but John adds—“*the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*” He brought out the intimacies of the Father; he had got at the under-current, for he had lain in the

bosom of Jesus, “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”—the sinner’s place.

Verses 4—6. This love from the beginning is that which survives all. The truth survives time, place, wreck, ruin, and every thing; service may be all failure, but truth is as fresh in the wild woods now, as it was in Jerusalem at first. So does love, that which it begets—Truth is the seed of life, and love is the principle of the Divine Nature in the saints: and as the seed, so too that which it produces, survives and lives.

Verses 7, 8. St. John does not take the place of St. Paul, addressing the Churches in the aggregate character; but he writes to an “elect lady” whom no one knows anything about, except that she had “truth and love.” She was known and “elect” of the Father, that was enough, and she is told to look to herself. This is increasingly in our day a valuable principle of truth. If

there is anything which comes to us with peculiar value, it is that it comes to us as a personal, individual thing. In his preaching to Israel, the Lord says, "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!" He could assume that blindness rested on the *nation*, and so could say, "*He* that hath an ear, let *him* hear!" So too in Rev. ii., iii. the Spirit could not trust the "candlestick" any more than Jesus could the nation of the Jews, and therefore says, "*he* that hath an ear to hear, let *him* hear!" So too, here, the elect lady is told "look to yourselves." This applies to her personal and individual state of soul. And so we can now speak. For whatever the aggregate failure may be, the word remains, "look to yourselves." We are "the elect lady" still, and are not to be made the sport of the deceivings of unrighteousness now, any more than when the Church stood in power. The "candlestick" may be removed, but we are protected from error, the "truth

and love" are with us, and we must "*look to ourselves.*"

Deborah was taken up in a day of strange informality. She was a strange successor to Joshua, &c.; but the Spirit was with her, and she could fight the battles of the Lord. So the "elect lady" here is made the guardian of the truth; she is told to let her hands hold truth in as much purity and security as though she were a "candlestick." And this is precious to us; for though we are alone, like her, we have authority to keep the deceiver outside the door. Something irregular this may appear. But in a day of apostacy, irregularity is the order of the Spirit, and the Spirit is always according to God.

Verses 9-11. How simple is the point of unity, "the doctrine of Christ," of the Father, and the Son. If our souls were drinking more simply of the precious doctrine of the Father and the Son, we should be ashamed to talk of

any difference of judgment—of being apostles of disunion. We want to get more light from “the Father and the Son.” “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” If the light of that doctrine were full and clear on the soul of each of us, we would rebuke such a thought. But still he tells to this “elect lady,” “If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” He gives her authority to keep the deceiver outside the door—and so with us. Let every one of us be the weaker vessel (that is what she was), and if the deceiver come, we are to look to ourselves, and keep him outside!

And now, verse 12, “Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.” Just

as the departing Spirit of Christ, at the close of Revelation, leaves the volume saying, "Surely I come quickly," so here—I hope to come shortly to speak *face to face* with you, and *then* our joy shall be full. "I have many things to say unto you,"—not all told out from Genesis to Revelation—not written "with paper and ink." He hopes to come shortly, and then it will not be communication with "paper and ink," but "face to face, that our joy may be full." O blessed hope! The lover of our souls, the LAMB in the throne will feed us Himself at the fountain for ever!

III. EPISTLE.

"The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I *love* in the *truth*," &c. We see the same spirit here as in the former epistle.

He desires that Gaius may prosper as well as be in health. For Gaius was distinguished, like some beloved ones now-a-days, in all offices of christian

hospitality, as we read of him in Rom. xvi. John might then desire all health and prosperity to him, for his prosperity was thus the servant of the saints. And he was now about to draw on this well-known grace of the beloved Gaius, in behalf of some who had gone forth to the service of the gospel in a very blessed self-devoting spirit.

And happy is it to get these notices of such sweet grace in the one, and such devoted zeal in the others, at a time when ecclesiastically things were bad.

And it must have been very sweet to John to be able to say—"I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth." This kept John's heart so much at ease. This told him of his peculiar joy. St. Paul's joy was at seeing the Church walking in order. That might now be gone; but here it is—"I have

no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth." We may be troubled at seeing the candlestick ruined, but there is a deeper joy—that of seeing the children "walking in the truth," and when brethren come, to get a good report of them. It is sad to one's soul to look abroad and see what ought to have characterized the dispensation, and then the present fruitlessness; but where does the Spirit lead us?—to this unfailing joy, "to see the children walking in the truth." Let us pray the Lord to give us more sympathy; we want to have the Spirit leading us to this.

It is only here that the word "Church" occurs in St. John's writings. And we find that he had honoured the Church in the place that belonged to her, by commending Demetrius and his companions in the ministry of the gospel to the hospitality and fellowship of the Church. But now he finds he can trust the Church

no longer, and he gets his relief in the personal individual grace of this “beloved Gaius.” He had honoured the Church at a distance—but he was disappointed. “Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre-eminence,” had got in, and John has to fall back upon that which can never fail, upon “truth and love” in the “beloved Gaius.”

As he leads us to “the elect lady” in the former epistle, so here he leads us to the “beloved Gaius;” and, from that day forth, the question has become one of individual, personal concern.

If the “candlestick” has failed, we are to cultivate “*truth and love*” in our own souls and among brethren. Thus the Spirit of God now teaches us to find relief and rest. Amidst the wreck and ruin of every thing around, may He knit our souls together, in “truth and love;” may He keep our souls in the doctrine of the Father and the Son!

Do we not thus happily see that when the Church failed, there was a

turning to the individual grace and brotherly love that was still in the saints? And as this is an irregular and disorderly state of ecclesiastical things, John shows that personal grace still survived, and was the relief, when the soul might thus be wearied by all things around.

These two epistles thus gently breathe one spirit. The "lady" was cautioned against receiving certain ones; "Gaius" was exhorted to receive certain others. Both, in their several grace, were used by the apostle or elder of Jesus, when irregularity had become, through the broken state of the "candlestick," the order of God, and the way of the Holy Ghost. And both epistles, as I have already observed upon the second, close with the expression of a hope that these lovers of each other "in the truth" would soon see each other "face to face"—till which time, much that might be added shall therefore be deferred. And so with

Jesus. All has not been told out—having reached *John*, nothing is to be added with “pen and ink.” The spirit of revelation, as it were, has ascended back to heaven. The volume of written inspiration is closed. The paper and the ink is filled up and exhausted. John was the last to use it. But, as we know, that which is now “seen through a glass darkly,” shall be seen “face to face,” “that which is now in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come.”

And may we, beloved, always be ready—ready in the spirit of our minds to meet Him—longing with the desire of our hearts to see Him “face to face.” Then shall we learn many further precious unfoldings of His heart, and “our joy shall be full.”

And till then may we ever come together as “elect ladies,” and as “beloved Gaius”—each heart full, and kindling the love one in another!
Amen.

“BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD.”

JOHN i. 36.

LAMB OF GOD! our souls adore thee
 While upon thy face we gaze;
 There the Father's love and glory
 Shine in all their brightest rays:
 Thy Almighty power and glory
 All creation's works proclaim;
 Heaven and earth alike confess thee
 As the ever great “I AM.”

LAMB OF GOD! thy Father's bosom
 Ever was thy dwelling place;
 His delight, in Him rejoicing,
 One with Him in power and grace:
 O what wondrous love and mercy!
 Thou didst lay thy glory by,
 And for us didst come from heaven,
 As the LAMB OF GOD, to die.

LAMB OF GOD! when we behold thee
 Lowly in the manger laid,
 Wand'ring as a homeless stranger,
 In the world thy hands had made:

When we see thee in the garden
In thine agony of blood,
At thy grace we are confounded,
Holy, spotless, LAMB OF GOD.

When we see thee as the victim,
Bound to the accursed tree,
For our guilt and folly stricken,
All our judgment borne by thee;
Lord, we learn with hearts adoring
All thy love in drops of blood;
Glory, glory, everlasting,
Be to thee, thou LAMB OF GOD!

“I SAW A LAMB AS IT HAD BEEN
SLAIN.”

REV. v. 6.

LAMB OF GOD! thou now art seated
High upon thy Father's throne;
All thy gracious work completed,
All thy mighty vict'ry won:
Every knee in heaven is bending,
To the Lamb for sinners slain;
Every voice and harp is swelling,
Worthy is the LAMB to reign.

Lord, in all thy power and glory;
Still thy thoughts and eyes are here;
Watching o'er thy ransom'd people,
To thy gracious heart so dear;
Thou for us art interceding,
Everlasting is thy love;
And a blessed rest preparing,
In our Father's house above.

LAMB OF GOD! thou soon in glory,
Wilt to this sad earth return;
All thy foes shall quake before thee,
All that now despise thee mourn:

Soon thy saints shall rise to meet thee,
With thee in thy kingdom reign:
Thine the praise, and thine the glory,
LAMB OF GOD! for sinners slain.

May the grace of Christ our Saviour,
And the Father's boundless love,
With the Holy Spirit's favour,
Rest upon us from above.
Thus may we abide in union
With each other and the Lord,
And possess, in sweet communion,
Joys which earth cannot afford.

WHY DO I GROAN?

“O wretched man that I am!” Rom. vii.

“We (which have the first fruits of the Spirit) do groan within ourselves.” Rom. viii.

THERE is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of *grace*, —to continue practically conscious that “we are not under *law*, but under *grace*.” It is by *grace* that the heart is “established;” but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend, than the fulness of *grace* —that “*grace of God* wherein we stand,” and to walk in the power and consciousness of it.

It is only in the presence of God that we can know it—and there it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God, there will always be certain workings of *our own thoughts* within us, and *our own thoughts* can never reach up

but still, even that is not all that is needed. In looking to Christ it is our privilege to forget ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in *not thinking of ourselves at all*. I am too bad to be worth thinking about,—what I want is to forget myself and to look at God, who is indeed worth *all* my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves, we may be quite sure that will do it.

Beloved, if we can say (as in chap. vii.) that “in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing,” we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with “thoughts of good and not of evil” long before we had thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of *grace* about us are, and take up the words of faith—“*If God be for us, who can be against us!*”

THE WAY TO JERUSALEM.

Ps. LXXXIV.

ZION is here the centre of the hopes and pleasures of the people happy in God.

Israel had been long a stranger in a strange land (the present place of the Church), both unable and unwilling to go up to the "house of God," but now the remnant begin to seek the enjoyment of that house. The ways of Zion—the track which leads thither, long deserted and waste, is now printed with the footsteps of their hearts; Zion, as God's dwelling and the place of his altars, is their resort, and they know in Spirit, and can say, "They that dwell in thine house will be still praising thee."

Previously, in Psalm xlii., they thus speak, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I re-

member thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar." Again: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?" hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God." There is here the expression of a thirsting after God, but no *present* sense of the blessedness of those who are in God's house.

In Ps. xliii., we see the consciousness of being cast off, and though finding God to be their portion, yet the crying out because of the oppression of the enemy, and the looking for the time of judgment, even the time yet to come.

Ps. xlvi. shews the accomplishment of their desire—no longer are they longing to go up to the tabernacle, as in a strange land, but—"We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of the temple, as we have *heard*, so have we *seen* in the

city of the Lord of Hosts, in the city of our God.”

This Psalm (lxxxiv.) is the expression of the joy of the Spirit of Christ in the Church, in finding her way into the “tabernacles of God”—she finds them most blessed—“*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts.*”

“*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.*” It is now no longer, as in Ps. xlii., “Lead me to thine altar, to God my exceeding joy.” They were then strangers in a strange land—getting home, and did not know, as now, the blessedness of dwelling in God’s house—the everlasting, blessed place of the revelation of His glory, in perfect liberty, enjoying what God is—at ease, enjoying the things that God had spread around them. It is not even the place of prayer, but of praise! “*They shall be still praising thee*” (and so with us by and bye, there will then be too great an overflow of blessing for any-

thing but praise)—praise is all the inadequate return they can bestow!

Jesus, after his resurrection, (Ps. xxii.), says, "In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." As regards trial, infirmity, and the sin that doth so easily beset us," He now *intercedes* and *prays* for us, but as righteous ones (in Him) associate with Him in the glory, in the midst of the Church he will by and bye be *praising* with us. The proper place of the Church is to be around Jesus, praising with Him: He, as Head of all, leading the praises. It may seem a strange word to some to speak of Jesus praising—but He is our Head, in *all things*, and will just as much praise with us *then*, as He prays with and for us *now*. If He is our Head in prayer now, he surely will be our Head in praise then.

Jesus is not indifferent to the blessing which arises to His people from redemption; the same love makes Him rejoice in the accomplishment of

it to them, which made Him offer Himself a sacrifice for them. In Ps. xl. after speaking of the accomplishment of redemption in His resurrection, he says, "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even *thanksgiving* unto our God." Inasmuch as in resurrection the Church was gathered to Him, it "put a new song in His mouth, even *praise* unto God"—In God's house all is praise.

We read of "Christ as a Son over His own house;—whose house are *we*, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. We rejoice now in hope of the glory of God,—then there will be the joyful fruition of our hope—"Blessed are they that dwell in thine house, they shall be still praising Thee."

This is the portion of the feeblest saint. As regards trial and sin, Jesus is now our "advocate with the Father;" but the time is coming when there shall be an end of all this trial

and sin. Then shall ~~be~~ discovered (what is now known to faith) that God has been faithful to us all through the valley; we shall know perfectly the love wherewith He has loved us even to the end. Then will it be *manifest* that He hath loved us even as He has loved Jesus, as it is said in John xvii. — “That the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me;” and all that glory which we shall have with Jesus, is the secret to the soul of the Father’s having loved us as He loved Jesus. It will be known in connection with all the unfolding of the riches of divine grace, and we shall be spiritually acquainted with the blessed manner of its accomplishment, we shall have communion given us with Himself, not only in being brought to God, but also in being introduced to that secret of love which is between the Father and the Son by the Spirit. Nothing kept back from us. That which Adam was wickedly crav-

ing after—the knowledge of good and evil—we shall have in communion with God. We shall see the secret of this in every thing in which His love has flowed out to us here. Now are we called to trust God, because of the circumstances in which we are, then there will be no longer need of faith—we shall know even as we are known, and we shall be “still praising Him.”

In ver. 5, we read, “*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee.*” God is the fountain of strength in all circumstances. His poor sorrowful saints may rejoice in that—their strength is in the Lord—their hope to dwell in His house, therefore we say—“*my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord,*” &c. The soul of the true Israelite must long and faint for the courts of the Lord.

“*In whose heart are the ways of them.*”—The Psalmist is here speaking of the remnant of the Jews, in that day, going up from the ends of the land to

Jerusalem. Many are at a distance from the loved altars, but their heart is in the way. Long, rough, dreary, it may be, and they have left all present, actual blessing, to go up by it. Oft they find the lack of fresh springs, the scorching heat of the sun lights on them, there is no shelter, no resting-place, but still it is—the way to Jerusalem!

Every thing around them is disagreeable, every thing most dreary; they are subject to toil, fatigue, distress—but still, they are on the way to Jerusalem! Is there any provision by the way? No, but they make no count of that—their hearts “long, yea, even faint for the courts of the Lord”—they are on the way to Jerusalem.

Thus should it be with us. As saints it is not for us to be looking for refreshment in the way, nor yet to be expecting that we shall not meet with difficulty and trial there. Whatsoever enjoyment we may have “in passing through

the valley of Baca," should be because of this—we are on the way to Jerusalem. Is such the case, where then is strength and comfort? In every part of the way. We have not to do with man, it is "whose strength is in thee," and our hearts are in the way: dreary it may be, dear friends, but is there not spiritual joy? We find the Thessalonians "received the word in much affliction," but it was "with joy in the Holy Ghost."

Not only the tabernacles, but the very way becomes pleasant; rough stones may be in it, yet, should the foot be struck against them, they serve but as landmarks in the way to Jerusalem. His strength being in God, his heart in the way, the saint is kept steadfast——Jerusalem is at the end! All his joys are holy joys, and not only so, but the new nature can be satisfied alone with the holiness of God.

Thus, "*passing through the valley of Baca,*" they "*make it a well, the*

rain also filleth the pools." God does not mark out for us before hand where the refreshment will be. The saint does not set out on his journey *looking* for a pool *here* or a well *there*, but with this thought—this is the way to Jerusalem. He cannot tell when the rain may fill the pools, but he knows that his strength is in God, and his heart in the way, and thus the "valley is made a well, the rain also filleth the pools."

Having this divine refreshment, "*they go from strength to strength.*" They have not to do with a changing God, but with one who is ever the same,—one who gives them renewed strength in the way to praise Him. The saint cannot say to his brother, "I found a pool in my way *here*, and you will find one exactly in the *same* place," he cannot tell, from his own experience, *where* the water will fill your pool, but he can say, "I have found God *always* faithful." Nay, God will let the saint have weariness here,

in order that he may be brought to feel that although all else fail, he can still "joy in God," and in being on the way to Jerusalem. The apostate may for awhile be joined to the people of God, but he will sooner or later fall away; he came for the pools in the way—Jerusalem is not in his heart—the Lord is not his strength, and when the way is weary, his own strength fails, and he gives up.

It is said here, "*my soul fainteth for the courts of the Lord.*" Just when it is the time of our extremity, God steps in (see 2 Cor. i.): when we are completely weak in the flesh, the soul finds the faithfulness of God. The saint in thus "passing through the valley of Baca" in the exercise of faith, "makes it a well." His very being weary shows him to be in the way to Jerusalem—that he is not getting joy from the earth. It is our privilege in trial, in difficulty, in exercise of soul to make the valley a well; our

strength being in God, our confidence in His love, we are conscious of His strength being *with* us and *for* us amidst it all. If we feel weary, blessed be God, He is our strength in our weariness. No matter what the difficulty, no matter what our weakness, when our eye turns to God we see that all strength is ours. He has said "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." The day may be one of trial, a hot day: the way, weary, not a green thing there on which the eye can rest; the land, "a dry and thirsty one, where no water is," not a single spring to the new man from the ground; but at the same time there is the rain from heaven, nothing can intercept that. God, who commands the heavens, can "make the valley of Baca a well, and the rain also to fill the pools."—"All our fresh springs are in God!" "They go from strength to strength." And then mark their security.

“*Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*” “What hath God wrought for us!” to appear unproveable, unrebukeable, and without blame before Him—in the presence of His holiness offering no discord, no hindrance, no violence to that holiness; but even adding our portion to God’s delight! Are any now feeling their weakness! in that day they shall be in God’s presence, the witnesses of God’s delight! What He set out with, was delight in the glory of Christ—what a place then is the saint in! “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come, He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.” Here is our joy, “*every one*

of them in Zion appeareth before God."

What a character should the saint bear to correspond with this calling! "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness!" If we are conscious of the joy of going up, of being in the way, to Jerusalem, what should be our characteristics? The signs of a pilgrim ought surely to be borne by such an one; the weariness, the dust of the road! What "fainting of soul" after the holiness of God should there be! Pools there will then be in the way; but, if your portion by and bye, even the holiness of God, is your soul's great desire now, that which will then be your portion, will now be the joy of your heart.

Will there not be trial? Yes, but, when in trial, let us look up to the great link between us and God in the courts of heaven: let us look up to Him whose righteousness has procured a place there for us; who has entered

in Himself, as it is said, "now to appear in the presence of God *for us.*" *Soon* shall we see Him in the courts of heaven, *soon* shall we be joined to Him there. But *now*, though still in the flesh, yet in the exercise of faith, and as having the Spirit of Christ, we can say to God, "Look not on us who are but sinful dust, look upon Him, who, having purged our sins by His own blood, is there for us,—*Look upon the face of thine anointed!*" Thus have we "joy in God."

"*The Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord God will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*" O Lord of Hosts, *blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee!*"

Again: the flesh in me may judge that sin is pleasant, and that my present circumstances are evil, but what faith says—what I have to say, is, "*all things work together for good.*" It is a wonderful thing to think of the

God of heaven, not only as being occupied with the work of Christ, but as taking an interest in all the detail of bringing me to glory! The consciousness of this keeps the soul humble and dependant, in the spirit of a little child: but it gives us energy in our walk, knowing that God is *for* us, according to His love in the gift of Jesus. Great simplicity of faith is that which we need so much in order to enable us to receive this, as it is said, "He hideth these things from the *wise* and *prudent*, and revealeth them unto *babes*." Then, have we to pass through the desert, we only find out the faithfulness of our God in it.

"*O Lord of Hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in Thee!*" May that blessing, in its practical power, be ever ours—because of all that the Lord of Hosts is towards us in "looking upon the face of His anointed;" and upon us *in* Him.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

THERE is a depth, a fulness contained in the words "*all things* are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; *all are yours*. And ye are Christ's: and Christ is God's,"—a depth and fulness, into the understanding of which our souls enter, as yet, at best, but scantily. It is our privilege to be daily learners, through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, *now*. It is the word of our God, that yet but "*a little while*" and we shall know even as we are known.

I would desire very briefly to touch upon some of the more prominent *personal* types, presented to us in Old Testament narrative, of the Church and her glories through union with Jesus. The Lord give us, in thus meditating together, blessedly to have

the joy of that word in the secret of our own souls—“*I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.*”

At the very commencement of the book of God, we get presented the purpose of His love in the gift of the Church to Jesus—“*It is not good for man to be alone.*”—Blessed word! blessed because of letting us into the deep secret of the ground, and showing us the eternal security of our own everlasting joy and glory. Our thoughts are raised out of, and above ourselves, and we have to confess to the freeness of God's love—the sovereignty of His grace.

“It is not good for the man to be *alone.*” Adam was set as God's viceroy, lord over the creation, which, coming forth perfect from his hand, He had pronounced “*very good.*” For a little moment there was that here which could afford a rest for God—He rested in the works of His hands. Sin had not entered, the power of death

and of the curse were as yet unknown ; all bespoke the excellency of His wisdom ; all showed forth His handy work. “ The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.”—All was in subjection—God’s principle of blessing. “ The cattle, the fowl of the air, and the beasts of the field,” as brought before him by God, received their names from Adam : “ whatsoever he called the living creature, that was the name thereof.” Adam as yet in happy intercourse with God, —obedient. How fair the picture ! One thing was wanting,—“ No *helpmeet* was found for Adam,” none with whom to share this place of blessedness. “ And the *Lord* God said, it is not good that the man should be alone ; *I will make him an helpmeet for him.*” He, who saw the need, Himself supplied it ; but *how* beloved ? The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh

instead thereof, and the rib, which the LORD God had taken *from* man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now *bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh*; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be *one flesh*."

That little moment past—how sad the contrast! Temptation comes, and sin. The rest of God is broken, and gone the scene of creature blessedness.

It has often been remarked that man, placed in responsibility of blessing, has ever failed in his trust; yet, that this failure has only served to bring out the reserve of grace—fresh and higher blessing from God, and the glory of the one unfailing man,—“*the man Christ Jesus*.” The ruin of the first creation was laid in the “offence” the “disobedience” of the “first man,”

—of him, under whom it had been placed. All that *was* so fair and “very good,” *now* “subjected to vanity,” fell in him; creation “groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;” the power of the curse is there—“cursed is the ground for thy sake;” and “death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” There is failure, utter ruin, stamped upon all that stands in the headship of the first Adam—“the type of Him who was to come;” but all the deep failure of the “earthy” man, and the “*abounding*” *sin* of his race, has but given scope for the display of the *super-abounding grace* of God through that “One,” of whom he was the “type,”—the “second man,” “the Lord from heaven.”

He who “from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,” was daily the delight of the Father, rejoicing always before Him—the eternal Son, “by whom all things were

created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible," and "*for* whom all things were made"—as born of a woman, the appointed *heir of all things*;" the "Son of man," "the second man"—He too hath had an "helpmeet," provided for Him of God. The one unfailing man, who, in the future manifested glory of the new creation (see Ps. viii. in connection with Heb. ii. 6—9), shall hold "dominion," for God, in blessing, over "all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea; and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," when God shall again take delight in the works of His hands, and the "name of the LORD" be "excellent in all the earth;"—will not be "*alone*," but will share His glory and His joy with her who was taken from his side when in the deep sleep, which, the LORD God, in wondrous grace, caused to fall upon him:

for Christ Jesus, by the "*grace of God,*" has "tasted death." It was, "*Thou* hast brought me into the dust of death." Assuredly our souls here trace the shadowing out of that, which the love of the Father in the gift of the Church to Jesus, had appointed to be done, and say, "salvation is of the LORD!" St. Paul, when referring to it in writing to the Ephesians, says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." But, O beloved, how blessed is the contrast between the type and the antitype—the unconscious sleep of Adam and the voluntary act of Jesus—obedience, for he was the obedient One, led him to say, "I come to do *thy* will O God!" but more than this, He "loved the Church, and gave himself for it."

Yet a little while and in the midst of the Paradise of God he shall say, "This is now *bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.*" "If any man be

in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, all things are become new: and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Christ Jesus." Whilst still in the midst of the old and groaning creation, they, "who have the first-fruits of the Spirit," and therefore "groan within themselves," may take all the joy of that word, "*We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,*" "*they two are one flesh,*" and by faith forestall the time when they shall be "glorified together with him." How blessed thus to know the power of redemption in the midst of all that is unredeemed,—to stand in the conscious result of "the one man's obedience"—righteous, holy, and without blemish;—the curse removed, by His having been "made a curse for us,"—death giving place to the reign of life,—confidence and joy in God restored,—we, not simply brought back into the standing of crea-

ture blessedness, which Adam lost, but made partakers of the divine nature—one with the sanctifier! What wondrous *grace!* “By *grace* ye are saved”—“the grace of God, and the gift by *grace.*”

In Gen. xxiv. we see the servant sent by Abraham to take a wife for Isaac—the Lord “prospering his way,” and Rebekah made willing to forsake her country, her kindred, and her father’s house, in order that she may be led to Isaac, and share his place of love and exaltation. Here, again, I believe we get a little picture of the Church, the bride of the true Isaac, the “son” and “seed” of Abraham, and that much to the comfort of our own souls. It is to her, as the “appointed” one of the Lord, that the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to glorify Jesus, to speak of Him, unfolds His message of love, telling of His exaltation, that, “unto Him” the Father “hath given all that he hath,” tak-

ing, and revealing, of the things of Jesus. Thus is she made willing to leave all dear to her by nature, all to which her heart would fondly cling, and, traverse the weary journey, as the sharer of the glory of which, through His testimony, she has heard. Such, beloved, is our portion; may we, as the chosen, the appointed for Isaac, that Isaac who was not merely "received from death in a figure," but the "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore," the risen, the exalted One, through the teaching of the Spirit know more of "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but

also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." May we "set our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth," and thus become practically dead to all which nature loves and clings to. Soon will the wilderness be crossed, and we safely brought home to him "whom having not seen we love, in whom though now we see him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Again: in "the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Solomon took to wife," we have presented to us a type of her who shall share with Jesus the glory of the throne of David, when that glory is taken up in blessing by Him at the same time David's "Son," and David's "Lord." "Black" she may be in her own eyes, yet oh how "comely" in his! "Behold thou art *fair* my

love, behold thou art *fair*." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." How has love here been tested! how has it stood the test! Surely it has passed through the deep waters of death, the billows and the waves have gone over it; for Christ has "loved the Church, and given Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, "not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." And he says, "thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee."

So too, though I would not attempt the interpretation of the type in detail, yet, in principle at least, we read her history in that of Ruth. The wondering inquiry, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" is met by, "The Lord recom-

pense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust," from him, who aptly performed the kinsman's part. The field where she first became acquainted with, and marvelled at his grace, is made her own,—“Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife.” The world “is yours,” “and ye are Christ's.” The “kinsman” has redeemed the one who was a “stranger”—and is not the language of our hearts the same—“Why have I found grace in thine eyes?”

These are but few of the foreshadowings of the Church in personal narrative, and briefly glanced at; many others are left unnoticed:* each presents some peculiar feature, and is, I believe, intended to teach us distinct truth, respecting her on whom the heart's love of Jesus has been set.

* As the wives taken by Joseph and Moses during the period of their rejection by their brethren according to the flesh.

Many and varied are the glories of Jesus pointed out to us in the prophetic Scriptures, but in the enjoyment and in the display of each and all of them will she participate. Has he yet to be manifested as the Son of Man,—the second Adam,—the head of that new and blessed creation into which the taint of defilement failure, and the curse, can never come? She, as we have seen, shall be there also, the “helpmeet” prepared for Him of God.

Is He, as the Son of Abraham—the true Isaac, to cause gladness, and be the centre of unfailing blessing, according to that word, “In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed,” when the son of the bond-woman shall have been cast out, and God been owned as the quickener of the dead,—she who has had, through grace, the ear to hear the tale of love, as the called and appointed one of God, shall be then brought home.

And thus with every other glory.

But how, beloved, is it that we can look forward with holy confidence to these things, and, with the fullest consciousness of what our own condition is, joy in them as ours? Because Jesus has “loved the Church, and given Himself for it;” because He has “sanctified it by his own blood.” Whatever the brightness of the glory, whatever the as yet unthought of depth of joy, the one song amidst it all shall be “*Worthy is the Lamb!*” “the Lamb that was *slain.*” “Thou hast redeemed us unto God by *thy* blood, out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue.” Yes, whatever be the character of the glory, this gives us the secret of all her blessedness—she is the “*bride of the Lamb.*”

Such, beloved, is our title, our alone title, and such our hope,—the Lord give us to know more of its practical power. May we have our hearts’ affections centred in Him who has thus loved us, and be found more as “a

chaste virgin espoused unto Christ."

As we have noticed, the purpose of God in the election of the Church, and her gift unto Jesus, is presented at the *commencement* of the Book; the *concluding* page unfolds her glory, with this blessed assurance of her Lord, "*Behold, I come quickly.*" "Yet but a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." May our hearts be gladdened by the thought, and respond in longing anticipation, "*Even so, come Lord Jesus; come quickly!*"

Jesus, who entered heaven for us,

Will soon again descend:

Priest, prophet, king, our Lord and God,

Our bridegroom and our friend.

Then let us rise and trim our lamps,

And as they brightly burn

Be seen as those who longingly

Await their Lord's return.

“THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.”

EPHES. vi. 10-18.

PART I.

THE Lord never loses sight of *His thoughts* as to the place of the Church —of what it is *in* Christ. In all the minute detail as to the conduct of the saint contained in the word, the highest principles are ever advanced. What the Lord looks for from the believer, is consistency in the place wherein he is set, the “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” How different this from the thought of the natural man, that is ever—do such and such a thing, and you shall be put in this place,—we know that He “*hath* raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” and, having the knowledge of it, are addressed accordingly. This gives a very holy character to each direction, for inconsistency in the smallest circumstance, is as unsuitable to the

place in which the Christian is set, as it would be in the greatest.

Sofaras regards our present position, there is, and must be, continual conflict; and it is only according to the measure of victory we attain, that the character which the Lord Jesus Himself exhibited when here will be seen in us. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." There is not a single grace in the Lord Jesus but is suitable for its exhibition in us as united to Him. It is union with Christ which sets the believer where Christ is, and through union we have the fulness of all that is in Him as our "Head." The "growing up" into this is a matter of attainment; but we have *all* received *every* grace that is in Christ in having received *Him*. It is not a part of Christ that we have received, but *Christ*; and consequently every grace that is in Christ is in the believer, though it may be smothered and hindered in its

manifestation through want of watchfulness in keeping under the flesh.

The “putting on the WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD” supposes the person to be saved, to be united to Christ, to have the Spirit dwelling in Him,—the very effect of all this blessedness is to place him in conflict with the powers of darkness—the “rulers of the darkness of this world;” but then it is with “God *for* him,” *against* them all. God is pleased through him to display His victory over the snares and devices of Satan, and to bear witness that He has a heavenly, and a heavenly-minded people, who have no portion here on earth. The character of “the men of the world” is, that they “have their portion in *this* life,” that they are full of treasures, and “leave the rest of their substance to their babes.” But not so the child of God,—he says, “As for me I shall be *satisfied* when I awake with thy likeness.” Nothing short of that will answer the desire of

his heart; he “presses toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

There are two things that the saint has to be watchful about, the one that as tempted on earth, he should not be led away after the flesh; the other, his portion being in “heavenly places,” that he should force his way there.

Israel were redeemed out of Egypt—so are we from this present evil world; they had seen their enemies lying dead on the sea shore: if we look at the value of our redemption, we can say—our enemies whom we saw are gone, we “shall see them no more for ever.” We are brought into the wilderness, and that which we see the Israelites called to in their journey through the wilderness, is patient *faith*, to walk as *trusting* in God, when there were no supplies of food in the way. But it is in their after history in connection with Joshua that we get blessed and minute instruction as to what is

our *conflict* with the enemies of the church of God.

The apostle, in this exhortation, speaks of being on our guard against the "*wiles* of the devil"—not of deliverance from his *power*. Whilst a person is unconverted altogether in the flesh, Satan *governs* them by their pride, their ambition, their skill, &c. although even then the Lord oftentimes exercises a providential care over them, as we see in the case of the poor man possessed of "Legion." The Lord never let Satan carry him beyond the region of his power; yet as soon as the devils departed from him, and entered into the swine, "the swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea and perished."

Naturally we are in Satan's world—Satan's; for though God made it, he governs it; he is the "prince of it;" he guides and rules it, exercising an influence and power over the heart of the unbeliever similar to that which the Holy Spirit does over the heart of

the saint, as it is said, “the spirit which now *worketh* in the children of disobedience.”

Moreover outward quietness and order make not the least difference as to this; whether it be by the quiet regular order of the world, or by that which is more outrageous and openly evil in its character; if Christ be shut out from the heart, it matters not, it is all the same. The quiet Gadarenes besought Christ “to depart from their coasts” as much as did the poor *demoniac*, as we should call him. Satan would “keep his goods in peace” if he could; it is still his world; they are still under his power. Such is our state naturally. As quickened of the Spirit, drawn unto Christ by the gracious things which he presents, we are “delivered *from* the power of darkness, and translated *into* the kingdom of God’s dear Son.”

Our experience ought to be of that which we are already in Christ. Our place, in point of *fact*, is at present

in the wilderness; but faith would ever realize union with Jesus in resurrection,—“our sitting together in heavenly places *in* Him.” And hence comes the conflict. There are two things very distinct yet constantly confounded together by the saints—bondage to Satan, and conflict with him. Israel were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but conquerors of the Canaanites. The question of the soul’s redemption is a settled one. The work is “finished,” all done for us in Christ. The Egyptians whom Israel had “seen, they were to see no more for ever.” But then after the knowledge of the fulness and finishedness of our redemption, there comes in another class of experience, as to the power of Satan altogether, and that *consequent* upon redemption. The moment we see death and judgment met for us in the cross, there is full deliverance from bondage to Satan. Resurrection takes us clean out of it; it is no longer a

question as to Egypt and bondage at all. Faith knows death and judgment passed on Jesus, and our portion in the heavenlies. *There* is our conflict. "The Canaanite is still in the land." God "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," but Satan would seek to hinder our enjoyment of these blessings. "We wrestle not against *flesh and blood*, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in *heavenly places*."

The first thing we are taught here is, that "flesh and blood," that is all the skill, wisdom, and strength of man cannot resist or avail in this conflict with "principalities and powers, and wicked spirits in heavenly places" one bit. Flesh and blood may be the *scene* where Satan tempts, but the moment it begins to exercise its energy the conflict is an unequal one, and Satan gains the victory. The enemies with whom

Israel had to contend, were enemies of flesh and blood—men like themselves; but we wrestle not with such,—our enemies are brought before us here in fearful array, and we have no power in ourselves to stand against them; hence the word, “Wherefore take unto you the WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD, that ye may *be able* to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

We have not to “stand against” the *power* of Satan (as we have seen, Christ has overcome him, and overcome him for us), but against “the *wiles* of the devil,” the deceit of his subtleties. He is our tempter as regards the old nature, and works by presenting something that is pleasing to the flesh. Religion in many ways may be in the *flesh*, as it is said, “Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?” Satan can “transform himself into an angel of light”—can put on holiness if that holiness be disconnected from

redemption, or speak of redemption apart from holiness. The Spirit of God giving a new nature, and revealing to us all Christ is as the object of our desire practically sanctifies us. The moment that we *know* our title to be in "heavenly places," and our hearts and our treasure are there, the Lord alone can be exalted, the flesh is made nothing of. On the contrary, the very minute we begin to linger in the wilderness, our hearts go after Egypt. It is our privilege, not merely that Satan should not lead us into temptation and sin *here*, but that we should force our way in the energy of the Holy Ghost into the "*heavenly places*," that we should not be earthly minded, but even now meet Jesus in the "heavenlies" in spirit, as we shall by and by in very truth.

The "Church of God" is just the witness of deliverance from the power of him who rules the world—the "prince of this world." "The carnal

mind" is one thing that is "enmity against God," but James tells us that "the *friendship of the world*" is also "*enmity with God*," and that "who-soever will be a *friend of the world* is the *enemy of God*." Whenever a man *seeks* enjoyment in and from the world, that man is "the enemy of God." He may be *ensnared* by it, but whenever he has enjoyment and pleasure in it, he is "the *enemy of God!*" Again; those "*who mind earthly things*" are said to be "the *enemies of the cross of Christ!*"

The Apostle tells us that *this* is an "evil world," and *this* an "evil day;" that what we have to do is "to stand." He supposes us to be in the place where, *having* our portion in Christ, we must necessarily be in conflict with Satan. The season of conflict is not the time for putting on the armour. When Christ's "evil day" came, as He said, "Now is *your hour* and the *power of darkness*," it found Him armed—He was

not hurried in spirit, nor off his guard, but went calmly forward. If I am trying merely to *grasp*, and *get at* Christ, when in conflict, I cannot have blessed peace of soul, and then there will be no power “to withstand in the evil day.” It is a great thing to enter into the battle as a soldier on the right side—to know “God *for* us”—to be “taking unto us the whole armour of God,” and thus to be ready when the “evil day” comes to resist, “to stand.” You never will hold conflict with Satan in energy so long as you are feeling, “Am I on the Lord’s side or not?” “Is God for or against me?” “Oh, if I could be but sure that I had an interest in Christ”—the word is “be strong *in* the Lord and *in* the power of His might.” “Take unto you the whole armour of God,” and that which is first spoken of in the description of this armour is,—

“Stand therefore, HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH.” What

is here assumed at once is the knowledge, that as saints of God, we are *redeemed*. We can never have our "loins" really "girt" until we *know* that we are redeemed. What is meant by "having the loins girt"? It supposes a person not to be at ease, but prepared for actual exertion. The children of Israel were to eat the Passover with their "loins girded," their "staves in their hands," and their "shoes on their feet," why? The Lord had *redeemed* them out of Egypt, they were strangers and travellers, and so the exhortation here supposes those addressed to be strangers, and passing as strangers through the wilderness on to the rest.

Now, until a believer *knows* that he is redeemed, it is as though he had lost one place, and has nowhere else to go. We cannot give up *this* world really until we have the simple and blessed assurance that we have *another*, until we understand what our

hope is, even *glory*, and the ground of our hope—redemption through the blood of Jesus. “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,” for we are called to hate our lives in this world, to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.” “*Himself*,” that is a big word; it is not said that he is to deny himself in one thing or another, in this or in that, but wherever “himself” comes in, he is to deny it. Again; “he is to take up his cross,” not once or twice, *but daily.*” But Canaan belongs to him, and he is on his journey to it.

The root of the thing—that which enables us to conflict with Satan—is that blessed truth, that we are redeemed and called to eternal glory, to an incorruptible and undefiled and enduring inheritance. Redemption is Christ’s having given Himself for our sins, that He might “deliver us from

this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father." The apostle tells us not merely to *hold* the truth, but to have our loins "*girt about*" with it. Whenever the full meaning of "*redemption*" is understood, it makes us know that heaven is ours, and that earth is not ours. Nothing but this truth can "deliver us out of this present evil world," consequently we resist Satan; we "stand against the wiles of the devil," by having the affections of our heart so knit to Jesus and to heavenly things, as to make us strangers here, *because* heaven is ours.

I could not be praising God (my proper engagement as a believer) unless the song of praise were put into my mouth on the ground of redemption. In Ps. xxii. we read, "My *praise* shall be of thee in the great congregation;" and in Ps. xl., "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and estab-

lished my goings. And he hath put *a new song* in my mouth, even *praise unto our God.*" Christ begins this song after redemption has been wrought. There was a time when "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." When the world was *created*, all was very good, but sin has come in and spoiled that, and now Christ takes up the song of *redemption*, and thus the saints can sing it too, as it is said, "A song of praise unto our God;" but they cannot sing it until they know redemption.

Satan is met by our having our "loins girt about with truth." The secret of a holy and unworldly walk is the being filled with the "truth," the inward man feeding upon Christ, and the better and enduring substance laid up for us in him. If Satan comes and says to us, "You had better enjoy the world," the man who has his "loins girt about with truth" can answer him, "No, I have got another world." If

he says, "but how do you know this?" "It is very presumptuous of you to think so;" he can answer, "No; for the Son of God hath died, and given the promise of eternal life, and an inheritance in another world to all those who believe on Him." He may then say, "Then why not enjoy yourself in this world, if you are assured of your safety." "No," the soul can reply, "He died to *redeem me out of this present evil world.*" And thus Satan is foiled in all his attacks.

But though the knowledge of redemption be thus blessed—the blaze of divine love, as it were, to my soul, it is *all* truth with which the loins should be "girt." We can never say that any one truth may not be the very one by which we may resist Satan the next time he comes to tempt us.

In order to this "girding of the loins," truth must be got from the Lord, we must be taught it by the Holy Ghost, then there is power in it;

otherwise, resting in the understanding, it serves only to puff up. For instance, that which relates to the second appearing and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, most blessed as it is, if our "loins" be not "girt" with it, is but speculative truth. If it does not draw me out of the world, make me dead to it, and like unto a "servant waiting for his lord," the study of it will be only the gratification of the "desires of the mind." In like manner, if I know the blessed truth of union with the Lord Jesus risen, why is it but that I should bring forth much fruit, that my affections should be heavenly, and that I should have communion with Christ by abiding in Him, and He in me? If I know that I am safe in Christ, what should I seek for but the power of living communion with Him, the joy that I have will then be in heavenly things.

If the truth that we have is not held practically, it is of no avail; it is

just as much of the flesh as active sin: the flesh can be shown about truth, as much as about any thing else; indeed it is by partial statements of *truth*, not by a direct lie, that Satan generally tries to deceive men. This is most strikingly shown in his mode of tempting both the first and the second Adam. We read that he whispered in the garden, "ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Adam listened to him. What did God say? "The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." But then Satan told him the truth in order to lead him to disobedience, not to obedience. Thus it was also that he tried to tempt our blessed Lord; it was a real promise he presented, but by it he sought to lead Jesus into disobedience to the Father. He is willing to use the most blessed truths, if he can but by doing so, lead the heart away from God. It is against the wiles of the devil that we are called to stand, he does not shew himself in

his true character. The hook is hidden by the bait. We should seek to know the truth in holiness, in fellowship with God. The object of our search after truth should ever be that we might know God.

Those who minister the truth to others have especially to watch lest they should only have an intellectual acquaintance with truth, not experiencing it to be the spirit and life in their own souls; otherwise they are but as the pipe that carries the water to others, themselves not drinking in, themselves remaining unrefreshed.

It is never safe for us to think that we have enough truth, if we know that we are the Lord's; we have to resist the "wiles of the devil;" he will not always use *one* way of tempting us, he will employ *every* artifice, and by his craft and subtlety seek to entrap us. He may try to deceive me by bringing a promise before me, and if I do not know the meaning of that

promise, I may easily be deceived by it,—we need “*all truth.*” Our Lord prayed, “Sanctify them through thy truth.” Satan knows that it is by truth that we shall be sanctified and separated from the world. Though he cannot pluck us out of the Father’s hand, yet he can scatter all the blessing, and comfort, and strength of the saints, and make them trip in the way. Let us “stand therefore, having our loins girt about with truth.”

The next thing that we find mentioned, is, “THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”—“having on the *breastplate of righteousness.*” Christ is “our righteousness,” and until this is known simply, Satan constantly uses the conscience of a believer, the very righteousness of his mind, to distract him. Where there is not simple rest in Christ, there will be perpetual distraction and distress of soul.

But then, again, as to practical righteousness, a saint should be watch-

ful in not allowing himself in those things which he feels to be wrong. If not so, he gives Satan a handle whereby to distress him. Although he knows that he has no righteousness but in Christ, yet as regards his walk, and in conflict with Satan, he feels that "if his heart condemn him, God is greater than his heart, and knoweth all things." If we are in conflict with Satan, and the flesh gets the better of us, Satan comes in, and we are laid low; and then, though safe as to our souls, all our comfort is lost, and the Lord is dishonoured by us.

The Apostle "exercised" himself to "maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and man," although we know that he counted all *his* righteousness to be as "dross and dung," as regarded his acceptance with God. Before God I forget myself, and Christ is everything, but in conflict with Satan, I have to stand for Christ against him who is His enemy. Whenever we

are not walking in holiness, we have not confidence in conflict,—we are not “quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord,”—we slip, and get into the power of Satan. If you would have strength against the world in your own soul, have on the “breastplate of righteousness,” otherwise Satan will try to make you forget that God is on your side. This is the greatest and most fearful exercise of his power. We read in Peter of those who, through their carelessness, “had become *blind*,” who could not “see afar off,” and had “*forgotten* that they had been purged from their old sins.” This is the only case in which the Scriptures recognize the Christian as not having peace. The saint thro’ lacking “diligence in adding to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity,” getting “*blind*”

and “*forgetting that he was purged from his old sins,*”—he is then in a more miserable state than the ungodly, the unconverted man.

If we are walking as those who have on the “breastplate of righteousness,” it will make a great difference in the power and energy of our prayers (1 John iii. 12, 22); we shall be asking heavenly things for ourselves and for the Church, but if we are not walking in the way, it will be confession and mourning.

Again,—truth ever gets lowered when the conscience is lowered. Men are ashamed generally to profess principles which they do not practise, and therefore they try to lower them.

But we have need of watchfulness even here against the “wiles of the devil.” Satan would seek to turn all this into *self-righteousness*. Am I trying to do it before men, it would become such, before God it cannot. The closer our souls get to God, the

more do they grow in the detection of the subtle forms of evil that arise in our own hearts, and *we* are kept in the dust. It is “approving ourselves to *every man's* conscience, as in the *sight of God.*” Though we are called on to “please every man his neighbour, for his good to edification;” it is not that they may please us again (the world's motive for pleasing each other); the example set before us is “Christ, who pleased not himself” who set God ever before Him.

More saints have fallen into error, into sin, from want of watchfulness in keeping a “good conscience,” than in any other way. From self-seeking, or pride, or vanity, the Spirit of God has been grieved, and no matter what it is that grieves the Holy Ghost, it weakens us in our conflict with Satan. We see a memorable instance of this in the taking of Ai by the Israelites, Achan had taken of “the accursed thing”—they were called to conflict—

it was a very little city, and they thought that a few men could take it—they went up, but they were smitten. Why? Because of the “accursed thing.” The same Lord that was at Jericho was at Ai; but He had been dishonoured, and they fought not with His strength. We have no strength in ourselves at all; it is “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might;” it is God’s armour we have to put on. “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Again—“And your FEET SHOD with the PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.” The effect of the gospel is to carry the soul into the presence of God, not in disturbance or doubt, but in perfect and settled *peace*, to carry up our hearts into the thoughts and mind of “the God of *peace*.” We have this *peace* as our portion through Christ having died and risen again, carrying us up in spirit where nothing can disturb our *peace*. Here, if the

least thing is out of order, or where our wills would not have it, that is sufficient to disturb our *peace*. The place of *peace* is the presence of God. *There* we have the unclouded, settled light of God's *peace* in our souls. Our past sins and present failures humble us, but they do not break in on this *peace*, their end is seen in the cross, and we have passed into that place where they come not. If we see them at all, we see them in God's presence, where they come to be the measure of the extent of God's love to us,—we see them in the perfect *peace* in which God has set us free from them all. “The *gospel of peace*” carries us into rest with God, as it is said, “We which have believed do enter into rest,” we are “brought to God.” Sin cannot enter there. When there we are undisturbed by the conscience of sin,—there is “no more conscience of sin.”

Neither do troubles reach that place—that world to come, whereof

we speak—a bit more than sin. All is calmness around the throne of God. When we get to God there is an end of troubles.

It was in this calmness and *peace* that Jesus always walked when on earth. Though He had the fullest consciousness of the suffering and shame that awaited Him, He “set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem,” His “*feet*” were “*shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*” When His disciples asked Him, “Master, wilt thou that we call down fire from heaven, as Elias did?” His answer was, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them: and he went into another city.” All the day long was He tried by the wickedness of men, who sought to entangle Him in His talk, but this only brought out more of the perfectness and grace of that place from whence He spoke. He was emphati-

cally “the Son of man who is in heaven.”

This is the way in which we are called to walk, but until we have rest of soul we cannot draw from God the grace we need for this end. If our souls are at rest in their heavenly inheritance, the insults and scorn of men will not disturb our *peace* in God. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect *peace* whose mind is stayed on Thee. . . Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of men : thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.” Nothing can throw us off our centre, for God is our centre.

How far, beloved, in intercourse with others, do you pass through circumstances in *peace*, not letting them come in between you and *peace*. When Jesus came into the midst of trouble, it was as oil on the troubled sea—all was calmed. The God of *peace* is our God,—our portion as

believers, to dwell in God's presence in sure and unclouded *peace*.

It is true that through the weakness of the flesh this *peace* may be disturbed, but I am shewing what God's ARMOUR, not what our FLESH IS.

It is abiding thus in the happy realized consciousness that "being justified by faith *we have peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ"—that *peace has been spoken to us* who were afar off—eternal accomplished *peace* "through the blood of the cross;" it is this that makes the spirit of *peace* overflow and flow forth from our hearts quelling the spirit that naturally dwelleth in us, of which the "scripture saith not in vain" that it "lusteth to envy," and making of us messengers, and ministers, and men of *peace*. Knowing that we are predestinated to dwell together in the ceaseless harmony of heaven, we now, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, in the power of

Him who worketh in us “endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of *peace*.”

Such is part of the “ARMOUR” provided for us of our God, that “strong” in Him, “and in the power of His might,” we may in this “evil day” “stand against the wiles of the devil,” —“resist,” and cause him to “flee” from us. It is only in communion that we shall be able to do this.

Fleshly weapons will not avail, and this is of vast importance. I may gain the advantage over another in confuting error by truth, but suppose I lose my temper in doing this, though I may have gained the victory over the *man*, Satan, through his “wiles,” has gained the victory over *me*. Thus was it with Peter in the garden, he used fleshly weapons, and did not gain the advantage over Satan in cutting off Malchus’s ear, but Satan over him. Our strength must ever be “*in the Lord*.”

MUCH in sorrow, oft in woe,
 Onward, Christian, onward go ;
 Fight the fight ! tho' worn with strife,
 Battle on to life.

Onward, Christian ! onward go ;
 Join the war and face the foe ;
 Faint not, little doth remain
 Of the drear campaign.

Shrink not, Christian : will you yield !
 Will you quit the battle field ?
 Shrink not, ere the fight be done,
 Ere the prize be won.

Mailed in armour, heavenly bright,
 Strong in Him whose grace is might,
 Onward Christian, onward go,
 Conquer every foe.

Fight the glorious fight of faith,
 Fear not conflict, fear not death :
 Conflict !—that but nerves to strife :
 Death to endless life !
 Onward, Christian, onward go,
 Scorning danger, shame, and woe ;
 Tread the path which they have trod
 Whose rest is now with God.

“THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.”

EPHES. vi. 10-18.

PART II.

It is of great importance to remember that that of which the Apostle here speaks has nothing to do with the ground of our acceptance with God, but is connected with that prayer of Jesus for his disciples—“I am no more in the world, but *these are in the world*, and I come to thee. Holy Father, *keep* through thine own name those whom thou hast given me,” &c. We are still “in the *world*,” the *flesh* is unaltered, and the devil, though triumphed over by Jesus, not removed, but going about as a “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;” nay, what is worse, as the wily and seducing serpent. We, exposed to his devices and his wiles, have no strength in ourselves to stand against them.

Jesus has prayed "keep them from the evil;" and the word to us is, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,—take unto you 'THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.'"

Satan aims his temptations at different parts in different saints. While the natural constitution of a person is of little matter as far as the Spirit of God is concerned, it is of much as to Satan. The Spirit of God strengthens that which is weak, and brings down that which is high in a man, but Satan suits his temptations to the natural character, so far as close observation, and the subtlety of the creature (for after all he is but a creature) can enable him to. It needs the "WHOLE ARMOUR" to meet him, and that is ever ours.

"Above all, taking the SHIELD OF FAITH, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."
 "The fiery darts of the wicked one"

are suggestions of *unbelief* whispered by Satan, and can alone be met and quenched by simple *faith* in the finished work of Jesus—this “SHIELD OF FAITH.”

It is necessary for us to learn the good-for-nothingness of the flesh; but when, through our folly, we do so in failure—in the presence of Satan, he immediately says to us, “This is not walking in the Spirit,”—“You are not a spiritual person,—not a saint at all,”—“You have sinned beyond remedy,” and the like. He would seek by every artifice (through our sins or otherwise) to persuade that God is not *for* us. If he succeed, our confidence is gone, in *conflict* we have no longer any energy, and as regards *service*, our hands hang down, and our knees become feeble. See the case of Jeremiah; he said, “O Lord, thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed. . . . I will not make mention of the Lord, nor speak any more in His

name *For* I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it." The spring of service was gone. Not so afterwards, *then* could he go on amidst all opposition, because consciously "strong in the Lord." "*The Lord is with me* as a mighty terrible One: *therefore* my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail; they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper!" &c.

It may be through our own folly, (as we have just seen) that Satan is permitted to assail us, but again we are sometimes thus brought into trial for the sake of others. (2 Cor. i. 3-11.) Paul speaks of having been "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that he despaired even of life." He *might* have reasoned, "God cannot be *for* me," but was it so? No; he took the "SHIELD OF FAITH," and said, "Suppose that Satan were even to kill, it would not prove that God

was *against* me, for He can raise me from the dead. God had an object in it all—"We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust *in ourselves*, but in *God* which raised the dead," and he was enabled to comfort others with the comfort wherewith he himself had been comforted of God. Paul was delivered from so great a death,—God was *for* His dear Son, yet He suffered Him to be taken "with wicked hands," to be crucified and slain.

Again—Satan was permitted to buffet Paul in a peculiar manner, through "the thorn in the flesh." Whatever that "thorn" might be, it was evidently something, the effect of which was to make him despised of *man*, for in writing to the Galatians, he says, "My temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God." Such a "temptation" was most disheartening to one sent of

Christ “to minister, and bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel;” but then what was God’s object in it? That their “faith might not stand in the *wisdom of man*, but in the *power of God*.” And what the effect of it on his own soul? He thereby learned that his Lord’s *grace* was *sufficient* for him; that his strength must be *in God*—“When I am *weak*, then am I *strong*.”

Thus we see that the “SHIELD OF FAITH” turns all Satan’s weapons *for* instead of *against* us.

This “*taking* THE SHIELD OF FAITH” denotes constant affiance of heart to God and is a fruit of the Spirit. An unconverted person cannot take the “SHIELD OF FAITH” against Satan; the *shield* which he uses is that of *unbelief* against the darts of God. Satan put it into the heart of Cain to limit the pardoning mercy of God, saying, “My sin is greater than it can be for-

given!" So he himself goes out from the *presence of God*—the place of *peace*, and plunges, as a hopeless, desperate one, into the vortex of the *world*.

If we have not up our "SHIELD OF FAITH," the smallest sin is able to cast us down to hell, in conscience, as our portion. But the Lord, we know, will not let the faith of any of his children fail utterly, this we learn in the case of Peter. Jesus had prayed for him that his faith might not fail; how has he prayed for us! (John xvii.)

Whatever abomination we may, through unwatchfulness, be suffered to fall into, let us beware of adding to it the wickedness of saying, "I have sinned *beyond* remedy." This is in fact asserting that, as it respects my case, the arm of the Lord is shortened that it *cannot* save,—the blood of Jesus Christ *does not* cleanse from *all* sin. There is *no sin*, however aggravated, how oftsoever repeated,

which is not met by that word *all*,—that is not by that precious blood put entirely away from before God's eyes. The way Satan tempted man at first was by occasioning distrust of the goodness of God respecting the forbidden fruit, and thus he still seeks to “devour” those that have believed, darting into our hearts the thought that God's mercy was never meant to be abused by such a wretch as I,—that God is not still *for* me. The word is, “whom resist steadfast in the *faith*.” If Satan know so much of my evil, and I know myself to be “the chief of sinners,” what must God's knowledge and thoughts about my wickedness be! Why so bad that nothing short of the cursed and ignominious death on the tree of His own blessed Son could adequately express or measure the sense of it. And yet, knowing it all, He has not spared His Son, but given Him up for me—“the just for the unjust.”

The case of fallen man was truly a desperate one. The law, in itself “holy, just, and good,” only served to bring out more clearly his ruin. The question was, Could God deal with it, and how? “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh.*” Here then is the conclusion in which *faith* can peaceably rest for ever—That God *has condemned sin in the flesh* in the cross of Christ. Jesus has had laid on Him the iniquities of us all. Is that the truth? Nay, not that only, far more than that! My very *nature* has been *judged, condemned, and executed* by God in the person of Jesus, my *representative*, on the cross, and I am now a “*new creature!*”—“*born of God!*”—brought into a *new kingdom*, the kingdom of God’s dear Son, where sin can never find a place! where the accursed can

never come! where I am, only, as *having left my old man and his deeds in the grave of Jesus!* “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were *dead* in sins, hath *quicken*ed us *together with Christ* (by grace are ye saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus.*”

There are two ways in which Satan works: the one, by seeking to make us have some fancied sense of uprightness in ourselves; the other, by leading us away from the path of uprightness, and through that terrifying us and disturbing our peace. What we need in each case is simple trust and confidence in Christ—the “SHIELD OF FAITH.” In the presence of God, all thoughts of any righteousness of our own are laid low, and we feel that God is entirely, infinitely *for* us in all His love and righteousness. The “fiery darts” of Satan will then be

spent, as it were, on God,—will fall harmless and be “quenched.” When we know that the “Lord is our righteousness,” what do we want with any other?

But there may be many an idol in the heart of the saint, which prevents his thus practically gaining the victory over Satan. Where is his strength but *in* God? still he knows that were God to come in, He would detect his double-mindedness, would shew out the hidden chambers of imagery that are in his heart, and this he dreads. Thus Satan gains advantages. “If our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light.” All the fulness of unhindered blessing is in God, and He is *for* us: “Let us then hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end.” Let us take “*the SHIELD OF FAITH, whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*”

“*And take the HELMET OF SALVATION.*” We get a similar exhortation to this in 1 Thess. v. 8,—“Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on . . . for an *helmet* the *hope of salvation.*” The two take in the whole standing and expectation of the believer; “the hope” denoting confidence of the glory in which the fulness of *salvation* will be exhibited,—that spoken of here, the settled knowledge and intelligence of the character of God in Christ as “our SAVIOUR GOD.”

The Apostle speaks to those who *are saved*, and *know it*; who *have* this “HELMET” and can *put it on*, to shelter and shield them from the strokes of Satan, who would ever lead us to be occupied with what *we are*, to be looking into our *own hearts*, and thus to become bowed down with despair.

The thought of the unconverted man is this;—he looks at himself as

responsible to God, and then tries to meet that responsibility in himself. It is quite true that we are responsible to God, that God shall judge the secrets of men's hearts, &c., but our knowledge of God does not stop here, otherwise it would bring in utter ruin. God is revealed to us in the Gospel as a "SAVIOUR GOD." This title supposes us to need *salvation*, and *salvation* to be *of God*. "The *grace of God* that bringeth *salvation* hath appeared to all men," &c. As looked at on the ground of *responsibility*, we are lost; but God has met responsibility by His *grace*.

Looking at God as a JUDGE, we know that "the *righteous* Lord loveth *righteousness*; his countenance doth behold the *upright*." The only way in which the unbeliever looks at God is as a JUDGE; and looking at Him thus, he must ever be afraid of Him. The natural conscience tells the man all is not right; but so far from this

“bringing *salvation*,” it is just the proof of his being a sinner; for he got into this conscience of evil by disobedience in the garden. Adam, when he had eaten of the fruit, and had the “knowledge of good and evil,” went and hid himself away from God amidst the trees of the garden; and this is what the natural man would always seek to do—hide himself from God because conscious that all is not right.

Here was just where Job’s friends were: they saw that God loved righteousness and hated iniquity, and that Job was in affliction. What was the conclusion they drew from the whole matter?—That if Job had been a righteous person, God would have accepted him,—they were altogether on the wrong ground. It is quite true, blessedly true, that God loves righteousness, &c., but then the fallacy is in the notion that a man *can be righteous* with God. The effect of such a

thought must ever produce either self-righteousness or despair and misery.

Where there is alarm of conscience after a person has been quickened, the distress and anxiety of soul may be very deep, but there will be a clinging and flying *to* God after all.

God does not deal with us, as regards the *acceptance* of our persons, in the character of a JUDGE at all. He may do so, looking at us as *children*, already accepted ones, as it is said, "If we call on the *Father*, who, without respect of person, *judgeth* according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear," but not as to acceptance. So long as we have the thought of God as a JUDGE before us, our souls can never have rest; we shall be always feeling our unanswered responsibility. The very way that God deals with us is, as knowing and estimating fully our responsibility to Him, judging us as *lost*, and then assuming altogether a new

character towards us—“*the SAVIOUR of those who are lost!*”

We have God especially thus brought before us as “OUR SAVIOUR GOD,” in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. In 2 Tim. i. 9, we read, “Who *hath saved us*, and called us with an holy calling, not according to *our works*, but according to *His own purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” &c. And Titus iii. 4, 5 :—“After that the kindness and *love* of GOD OUR SAVIOUR toward man appeared, not by *works of righteousness which we have done*, but according to *His mercy he saved us*,” &c. There is no mingling up here of the question of responsibility, and then seeking to meet that responsibility by what is in us. “*Salvation is of the Lord*”—all of *grace*.

Suppose I present to God the fruits which even His Spirit has wrought in me as the ground of acceptance; this

would be coming to Him as a JUDGE, and not as a "SAVIOUR." Of course one man judges of another by the fruits of the Spirit which he sees manifest in him, but the craft of Satan is shewn by his taking the thing which is true in itself, and putting it in the wrong place. The Spirit is, in truth, the witness to us of the finished work of Christ. He glorifies Christ, not Himself, giving strength to our hearts by showing us Jesus "in the presence of God *for* us." We are taken off the ground of standing in our own righteousness, and made to rest simply on that which Christ has done, for acceptance with God, "accepted in the beloved." Satan would lead the soul to look at the fruit of the Spirit in itself for the assurance of acceptance, instead of to Christ's standing and righteousness before the throne of God. It is the work of the Spirit of God to make us see the *evil* of our hearts, to detect our *inconsistencies*.

Whenever He reveals to us the holiness of God, He thereby reveals to us our *want* of holiness, and consequently makes us know our *short comings*. Where there is real conviction of sin, we can never have assurance from thus looking into ourselves,—we shall be saying, “Oh, I do not see the fruit I ought to see! I have not that ‘joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,’ &c., which are spoken of in God’s word. If I could see more fruit in myself, then I might have this assurance!” All this is not looking at God as a “SAVIOUR,” but as a JUDGE. The feeling that if we had more of that which could meet His judgment, we should get peace, shews that we do not know God as a “SAVIOUR GOD,” and that we have not peace because the practical work which God sees needful is not carried far enough in us. Much of the flesh has perhaps been undetected, which Satan might use to hinder the depth of our communion

with God. We may frequently see a humble, distressed believer, who, the more he loves holiness, the more he feels his own want of holiness, and is thus kept in bondage; he has not as yet seen the fulness of Christ's work; he knows not God as a "SAVIOUR GOD."

The soul is often ready to say, "I have turned away from God. I have done so and so; these are not the works of the Spirit" (nor are they): but there is not here the simple recognition of God as a "SAVIOUR." The evil of the flesh has not been thoroughly searched out, and it may be through great trial, perhaps, that this comes to be done. If the "works of the flesh" have been produced in the least conceivable degree, and God is looked at as a JUDGE, conscience will accuse the person of having apostatized from God, though the very anxiety of his mind is a proof that he has not done so; he owns God to be righteous, and justifies Him in all

His dealings; that which he needs is to apprehend Him as a "SAVIOUR."

"The flesh never looks at God as a "SAVIOUR." The only way in which the natural man thinks that he can meet God, is by making out a sufficient righteousness in which to stand before Him as a JUDGE, and if God is not satisfied with that, he will not bow to God.

Salvation is suited to us in our *weakness*. Suppose a person were to say, "I see the Christian's high calling, but I cannot walk according to it; I am *ungodly*, and I have no *strength* to get out of my present state;" you can answer, "This was just the way God commended His love toward us; 'when we were yet *without strength*, Christ died for the *ungodly*.'" The more we feel that in ourselves we have *no strength*, in ourselves we are *ungodly*, the more shall we look in simplicity to God as a "SAVIOUR."

If we were not *sinner*s, or if God could allow of *sin*, we should have no need of a SAVIOUR; but as God could not allow of *sin*, and yet loved us as *sinner*s, He must needs assume towards us the character of a SAVIOUR, “*a just God and a SAVIOUR.*”

Thus in conflict with Satan we are called upon to “*take for an HELMET THE HOPE OF SALVATION.*” We are led on by the energy of God’s Spirit in confident *hope*—hope of entering into rest. Our “*hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know them?*” We are not capable of reaching the bottom of our hearts, and Satan is so subtle that he will often suggest a thought of *sin*, and then put us under the guilt of it, even because we hated it; or again, with Job, we may have complacency in our very guilelessness. When we look at God as a JUDGE, we cannot tell whether we have peace or not; but the moment we look at

Him as a "SAVIOUR," we can say, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Our sins are the very things we need God for. Oh, wondrous grace! instead of entering into *judgment* with us as sinners, He says, "I, even I, am He that *blotteth* out thy *transgression* for mine own sake, and will *not remember thy sins!*" He could not bear to have the sins of His people in His sight, and therefore, what has He done? "*put them all away,*" "*cast them behind his back,*" "*drowned them in the depth of the sea.*" A man can never hate sin till he is cleansed from it. The believer hates sin, because God hates it, not because he has been ruined by it,—it is hateful to God and therefore to him. All this springs from one simple, blessed truth—*our God* is a "SAVIOUR GOD."

The soul can say, "*If God be for*

us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, &c. shall be able to separate us from the *love of God*, which is *in Christ Jesus our Lord!*" The knowledge of this love is our "HELMET" in the day of battle. We are *now* in trouble and conflict. True; but "if we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be *saved* by his life." We know that though "we which are in this body do groan, being burdened," the price of its redemption *has been paid*; Christ has power over the body as well as over the soul, and because Christ lives we shall live also. In this is the hope of the Church. In John iii. we read, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever be-

lieveth in Him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life." The Son of man was "lifted up" to meet the judgment of God. Again: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him *should not perish*, but have everlasting life." Here it is the love of God in the gift of His Son. In both cases does the Holy Ghost repeat the words "*should not perish.*"

Nay, more, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes again in glory, it will be for *salvation* to us, though for judgment to the world. (Heb. ix. 27, 28.) God never varies the thing, the Church is dealt with in this present life, and then, on this one and the same ground of *salvation*—"Now is our *salvation* nearer than when we believed."

"*Take for an HELMET the HOPE OF SALVATION.*" The Lord charges and presses on us the assurance that we *are saved*: simple faith cannot but believe it. The Holy Ghost reveals

to us the *holiness* of God, and that in ourselves we are *lost*, and then He testifies of Christ as God's *salvation*, and the moment we believe on Him we are *saved*. The two great points for us to see are, that Christ has finished the work for us, and that the Church has this "hope" set before her, that "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." What a spring, dear friends, should this blessed "hope" be to us; we have nothing short of the glory of Jesus to look forward to,—no hesitation in assuming it as ours.

Have you this confidence in God as a "SAVIOUR GOD?"—Has He not given, beloved, a *sure* ground whereon to rest? Do you live in the power of it? It should not be, "I trust I *shall* be saved *by and bye*," but living with God *now*, sitting *now* in heavenly places. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." "Herein is our love made perfect,

that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world." "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked." If I can claim this blessed privilege—if I have this righteousness which can sit on the throne, because one with Jesus, then I ought "to walk even as He walked." Nothing can meet the subtlety of Satan, but the revelation of the glory of Jesus as ours. The saint knows that his inheritance is not *here*, but that *God* is his portion, and therefore he is dead to *this* world. Were any to present to us as the object of our "hope" that which is short of being in the glory with Christ, it would be too low a hope. Were they to put the work of the Spirit in the place of that of Christ, it would not do. "I stand accepted in the beloved." Do not tell me of anything I must *attain* to first. I *have* it all in Christ. Thus are we taken practically

out of the power of those things by which Satan deceives the world.

This “HELMET” empowers me to lift up my head confident in the *grace* wherein I stand, and rejoicing in *hope* of His return—who shall, at His coming, change our vile bodies into the likeness of His own glorious body! Thus the spirit of fear and doubt is cast out, and we have the spirit of a sound mind to withstand the “*wiles of the devil,*” though teachers of the law, of ordinances, of philosophy, of tradition, of every vain deceit,—Our God is a “SAVIOUR GOD.”

“*And the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, which is the WORD OF GOD.*” The Lord uses this word, which “is quick and powerful, and sharper than any *two-edged sword,*” in searching our hearts, discerning their thoughts and intents, convincing us of sin, and laying low our pride; but here we find he says to the saint, “Do you take

this 'SWORD' as part of the 'ARMOUR' to be *used* by you in conflict with Satan." This can only be done efficiently in the Spirit; if the flesh uses it, there may be rebuke taken where there ought to be comfort, or encouragement where reproof is needed. This "weapon of our warfare" is "mighty," not through man's intellectual use of it, but through an honest, humble dependence on God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit that abideth in us, who is "greater than he that is in the world" (Satan). But it is only as being on the opposite side to Satan that we can use it aright. It is not with, "such a thing is *expedient*," &c. that we have to meet Satan, but with, "*God says so*;" "*It is written*."

Would Satan present us something better than that which God has given (the way in which he tempted Adam) we are "sanctified unto *obedience*," and have this assurance,

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” Our Lord might have prayed the Father and He would have given Him twelve legions of angels. He need not have suffered; but He came “*to do the will of Him that sent Him.*” By doing that will He has saved us. What is the place wherein we are set? That of Christ when in the world—*obedience*. The great thing to be sought after is practical conformity unto Christ. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

The place of *sanctification* is ours; and that “*unto obedience.*” It is in this way that the “word of God” has its power over us. A man may be saying, “I wonder what the meaning of this text is:” put him in the place of temptation, and he would find it to be his very strength—that wherewith to oppose Satan.

If we are not walking in the Spirit,

we shall not have the fitting scripture to meet any difficulty in which we may be placed, or those who may oppose themselves. Hence the value of diligence in communion. Whilst it is true that at any time (as far as concerns God's ear being open to us) we may lift up our hearts, it is also true that if not spiritually-minded we shall not be inclined to do so in the time of need. There must be practical diligence in seeking God's face in order to meet Satan in recollectedness of Spirit: "The diligent soul shall be made fat."

If we would baffle the craft of Satan, the word must be taken as God uses it, and this we can only do by the Holy Ghost. Suppose I know many things of God, true to faith, I may apply a quantity of Scripture to that to which it does not at all refer, and when placed in the circumstances in which it does apply, in which God would profit me by it, I have it not. Thus we often see people meagre and

contracted in their views, because shut up in *one* truth.

If you are unable to see the meaning of a text, wait; do not be giving *your sense* to Scripture, but get *God's sense* of it. God has a *sense* in every Scripture.

The **WORD** is the only weapon that we have to use offensively against Satan. Take it as **GOD'S WORD**, in holy acknowledgment of God as its author. We are told to "receive with *meekness* the engrafted word, which is able to save our soul." I would earnestly press on you thorough dependence on the "WORD," and, at the same time, that it cannot be used efficiently except as by the Spirit. It was by this that the Lord baffled all the *subtleties* of Satan—meeting him at every turn with "*It is written.*" When speaking, He ever shewed the consequence He would have attached to the *written word*. "If ye believe not Moses' writings, neither will ye

believe my words.” We are told to “have these things always in remembrance”—that “they are written for our instruction.” If we know anything of the state of the Church, we know what great power Satan has had in scattering and worrying the sheep of Christ, by drawing them away from the “WORD OF GOD,” and turning them, instead thereof, unto the “traditions of men.”

With the “SWORD OF THE SPIRIT,” then, may we cut through every specious entanglement whereby Satan would still detain our feet in “this present evil world”—his own kingdom. Pull down the strongholds of lust and self-will, “cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”

“THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.”

EPHES. vi. 10-18.

PART III.

IN this last direction given us by the Apostle—“*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak*”—we are cast back again simply on God, in entire abiding dependence.

That which is ever the result of conflict and exercise of soul before the Lord, in standing against Satan, whether learnt through the display of his

power, or the grace of Jesus, is the knowledge of our own emptiness and the Lord's fulness. It is not merely that we gain the victory over Satan, but that in all our conflicts we are continually learners of what the fulness of the grace of God is, through finding out our own emptiness and weakness. The more thoroughly we know this, the more we feel our own nothingness, that we have no strength at all in ourselves, the more simply and entirely we lean for *all* our strength on God. "*My grace is sufficient for thee.*" There is nothing so weak that His strength cannot give it might; nothing so empty that His fulness cannot fill. And yet how slow we are to reckon thus upon His grace; how prone to trust to something of our own. Is it not so? notwithstanding oft-repeated proofs of mercy and loving-kindness, are not our souls still apt, even in the very least thing, to doubt His love?

In conflict we find out practically what is our own nothingness, nay our worse than nothingness; but, whilst learning this, are brought also to see what is the patience of God's love toward us, what the riches and fulness of His grace. It is of vast importance that we should thus *know* God. The character in which, during this present dispensation, we have especially to learn and to do with Him, is that of "*the God of all grace.*"

Redemption teaches this, for there He deals with us, not as an angry God (though having every thing to be angry about), not in exercising judgment against us as sinners (though He might most righteously do so), but as "*the God of all grace.*" The Cross, whilst it meets and shows out the *righteousness* of God, is at the same time the testimony unto His unbounded *grace*. How infinite the love of God seen there in coming down to meet us in all our wretchedness and

sin! “*Greater* love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends* :” but when there was not one thing in us pleasing unto God; when we had sold ourselves for nought to Satan; when we were foolish, disobedient, deceived, hating and insulting God, despising His mercy, going after idols, loving any thing in the world rather than Him, —*then, even then*, His love reached us! and how? not only in pitying us, but in giving His Son unto condemnation and wrath for our sakes.— “*God commendeth HIS love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners CHRIST DIED FOR US!*”

Here we learn *grace*—grace which distances all our thoughts, grace before which we can alone be silent. Here we learn *love*. “*God is love.*” “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." We might as well, and much better too, talk of darkness at noon-day, as of God's wrath being toward us, when Jesus died for us as sinners.

But there can never be any self-exaltation in the reception of infinite grace. *We are debtors to mercy alone.* The blessed place in which we are set, when we know God as love, is that of "vessels of mercy." The manifest wisdom of God is displayed and made known unto principalities and powers in heavenly places by His grace toward us. We have the reception and enjoyment of that grace in ourselves. Thus we come to have fellowship and communion with God. The special mark of the saint is, that he has "known and believed" the love that God has to him (1 John iv. 16.) God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love [love with us, *margin*] made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because *as He is, so are we in this world.*" Jesus has stood in our place, has borne all that we should have had of judgment, and we have all the acceptance He has in the presence of the Father, even whilst here "in this world."

Jesus said to His disciples,—“In the world ye shall have tribulation,” (and is it not true, that in our measure we have this now?) “*but,*” he added; “*be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*” This dispensation teaches us *grace*, the next, *glory*. Present grace is that which we need, all that is in Christ for us. We read: “The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world,*” and that, “looking for that blessed hope

and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and *purify unto himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works." We are brought into fellowship and communion with this grace, we have not merely to know of its existence, but to learn its breadth, and length, and depth, and height. It as full as the glory, though not the same thing. Through *grace* the believer sees all his sins removed away, Christ standing between himself and them; therefore as regards them he has rest: but then, whilst here waiting for the Lord, he finds continual conflict and difficulty in his way, and he has to learn all the fulness of the grace that is in God, applying itself to the circumstances in which he is and about which he is exercised.

We have before spoken of the "ARMOUR" which is provided of God for our use, and of "the weapons of

our warfare," now we come to notice that which will alone give us power to use them aright.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."— This kind of prayer denotes confidence in God. It is not the cry which, as to a judge, the poor sinner would make under conviction of sin, but the appeal of a child in trial and difficulty unto the known love of its father,— the prayer of those who are spiritual, and who find themselves to be in a condition wherein they are thrown simply on God. Again, it is not the seeking to gain strength, in order merely to know that our strength is there, but that we may practically learn what God is, by the power which He exercises toward us and for us.

This "praying always" supposes the person not to be fainting, but to be *using* the "ARMOUR" in connection with it; "having the loins girt about with truth," for instance, the soul not

resting vaguely on God, but whilst casting itself on Him, reckoning on an answer according to the mind of God as revealed in His word. The saint may not always get a direct answer to his petition : Paul, we know, prayed that the “thorn in the flesh” might depart from him : what was the Lord’s answer ? was it removed ? No : “My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness” —that is to say, “It is better for thee to know the sufficiency of my grace, than to have the thorn taken away.” He got the victory over it, but he did not lose it. He was able to say, “Most gladly therefore will I rather *glory* in infirmities, *that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*” It was not sin in which he gloried ; people often call their sins the spirit of unbelief, and the like, infirmities ; the things wherein he gloried were—affliction, persecutions, distresses for Christ’s sake, &c. ; for through them

he learnt the sufficiency of the Lord's grace.

John says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, *if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*" Now how are we to know the Lord's will from our own fancies and imaginations? By His word. If I go and pray for a thing not founded on the knowledge of the Lord's will as revealed in His word, I cannot have confidence about it. Were He to grant me what I desire, He might very likely only be answering my own foolish, corrupt will. If my flesh is at work, and my soul is not brought into obedience and subjection to the word, I cannot be "praying in the Spirit." The first thing the Spirit would do would be to humble me by the word into a sense of the condition in which my soul is. Supposing, for

instance, I am walking carelessly and inconsistently, and yet am beginning to ask, as a very great Christian, for things only suited to the state of such an one; if the Lord were to answer my petition, it would only tend to make me a hypocrite: the first thing the Spirit would do in such a case would be to make me humble under a sense of my real need. *Prayer in the Spirit* is always from a humble sense of need; then be it but a sigh or a groan, it is *prayer in the Spirit*; if we know our spiritual need, and cry to the Lord under the sense of it, we may always reckon on an answer. If our desires are according to God, they cannot be according to the flesh. The very thing the Lord would ever have us to learn is our real need; and He would have us do this in order that we might draw out of His fulness for its supply.

In Jude 20, 21, we read, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on

your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Ghost*, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We do this, "pray in the Holy Ghost," when in putting up our petitions we are conscious of His presence, and conscious too that we are acting according to His will, even though our understanding may not be able fully to unfold to us what we need. When Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus He wept and groaned within Himself; this was not merely because Lazarus was dead, but because of the power of Satan which was there displayed. Then lifting up His eyes to heaven He said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth."

Here was the full answer—power and victory exhibited over death. If we at all rightly estimate the condition of misery in which man is, the way sin is abounding, and Satan triumphing, the dishonour done to the name of God; if our eye is fixed on the glory into which ourselves and creation around us will shortly be brought, and we then look at the groaning and travailing in which it all is now—we too must “groan within ourselves.” But then we shall often “*know not what to pray for as we ought;*” there will be that felt by us which we have not the capacity to express; this is taken up and expressed by that blessed Spirit which dwelleth in us (Rom. viii. 26, 27); He “helpeth our infirmities; . . . He maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the

saints *according to God.*" This groaning is not the cry of the wounded spirit (though God's ear is ever most open to that), but groanings against the evil within and around us, yearnings for the day of the glory of Jesus, and of the manifestation of the sons of God, which is the only possible remedy for all that evil through which the name of God is now dishonoured.

If I am standing myself in truth, without guile of heart, having no hidden sin, I can look to God in intercession for others. Just accordingly as the word of God is used by us in self-judgment, can we pray with the confidence of being heard and answered. (1 Jno. iii. 21, 22.) In Heb. iv. we read, "the word of God is quick & powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," &c. Here we first see the word searching

the heart, then in the discernment of what we are, we are brought in truthfulness before God, and then, Jesus being our High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Just so far as we rightly understand what is our own place and the place of the Church by the word can we "*pray with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.*" Nothing short of this is "*prayer in the Holy Ghost.*"

But let not this weaken our sense of the liberty we have to bring *all* our desires, our every request, to God in prayer. Whilst we can look for a definite answer to our prayers, if acquainted with the mind and will of God, yet we know that it is according to His will that we should "*cast all our care upon Him.*" Have we a care or an anxiety about any thing; remember that He bids us "*be care-*

ful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." However foolish our "requests" may seem, let us not demur on that account to draw nigh, but in childlike confidence bring them unto Him; He will grant them if it would be good for us, and if not, if they be foolish, or wrong, He will teach us better. He says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Your very difficulty may be darkness and uncertainty of mind; go and tell God that you do not know what to ask for, this is your need, and your need is the very thing to be carried to God. He will meet you there—"it shall be given him." God loves the confidence and seeking to Him of His children. We should ourselves like our children to tell us all their wishes, all their wants, leaving it to us to act as we saw right about them. He has all the feelings of the father's heart to-

wards His little ones. But "*praying in the Spirit*" is our privilege, and the more blessed when in full understanding also.

This "*praying always*" is that which meets the tendency there is ever in us to faint. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles: they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." How can I wield effectually the "SWORD OF THE SPIRIT" unless my arm is strong, or hold up the "SHIELD OF FAITH" if I am weary? We are cast in the use of these things entirely upon God. As the poor widow mentioned in Luke xviii. 1-5, our refuge is "*always to pray, and not to faint.*" There must be the sense of continual, abiding dependence upon God. This is the place which our blessed Lord took, and it is ours. Where Satan seeks to come in is just here, as to communion between us and

God. His effort is to weaken our actual power of communion. He does not try all at once to destroy a person's faith, but he saps the source of it as well as he can. Thus was it with the Church of Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy *first* love." There was still found in it the work, the labour, the patience, but the power of communion there had once been was gone, and therefore the message, "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent." The way by which Satan ever gets in is by giving some little satisfaction in *self*, thus weakening the "*praying always*," the very thing which sustains practical righteousness, then he draws on the soul further and further, till at last he makes it doubt whether it has ever prayed at all. The sense of God's love gets weakened, and then the world becomes more

attractive. Communion with God maintains two things, the sense of blessedness in His presence, and separation from the world.

“*And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*” Watching unto prayer is the continual, the habitual exercise of the priestly function; the taking up every matter that falls within our cognizance in the power of fellowship with God—so using persons and circumstances as to make them matter of intercourse with God.

We do not sufficiently seek to have the Lord with us in the *prospect* of suffering. How was it with Jesus? Our blessed Lord, when the hour of His conflict was coming on, when, in the garden of Gethsemane, He was entering by anticipation into the bitterness of death, spent the whole night in *watchings and prayer*. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here and *watch* with

me. And He went a little farther and fell on His face and *prayed*, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Coming to His disciples, He finds them "sleeping for sorrow," they sank under it. He says to Peter, "What, could ye not *watch* with me one hour? *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*" Jesus prays yet more earnestly, and is strengthened for "this hour"—so that when the "great multitudes with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people," come to take Him, He steps calmly, firmly forward, saying, "Whom seek ye?"—"I am He." Then "they (the disciples) all forsook Him and fled."

Christian, when you feel or fear any trial approaching, go at once with it to the Lord, pass through the trial in spirit with your God; and then,

when you have actually to pass through it, He will give you strength to bear it, He will be with you in it; and, like the children passing through the fire, you will lose nothing but your bands, or you may even find that the Lord has put the trial away.

This watchfulness of the Spirit is ever contrary to the flesh; but remember the words, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*" When in this state of watching unto prayer, I see Satan's hook under the bait, I detect him who laid the snare, and then, "in vain is the snare spread in the *sight* of any bird." "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." When I am watchful every thing turns to prayer. I can "put on the WHOLE ARMOUR of God," and am "able to stand against the *wiles of the devil*:" but on the contrary, when walking in the flesh my prayers are turned into confession and self-reproach, and my life will be a life of sorrow. Watch-

fulness *sees* the host, but *looks to the Lord against* the host; it *sees* the evil before it is brought out, but remembers the word, "Greater is He that is for us, than all that can be against us."

The real anxiety, the watchfulness, and caring for the Church, of Paul, brought him into very much difficulty and conflict. (See 2 Cor. vi. and xi.) He passed many a sleepless night because he so cared for it, and where this is found in its measure in us there will also be "in *watchings* often" for "*all saints.*" There can be no true energy of love in the Spirit in us towards *one* saint apart from the rest; we shall find ourselves to be connected with *all* saints. Christ loves *all* saints: when we shut up our love to *one* or even to *so many* saints, it matters not what the number, we shut up ourselves in narrowness of spirit, we lose part of the comprehensiveness of Christian love; Christ intercedes for *all* saints.

The blessed place in which we are set (as brought before us here), is that of intercession with Christ for *all* saints — “*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for ALL SAINTS.*”

When the deacons were chosen (Acts vi.), why was it? that the apostles might give themselves “to *prayer*, and to the ministry of the word:” the very first thing they thought of was recognized dependence upon Him from whom all the ability to minister in the word came. And this was not merely a casual circumstance, the way in which Christ has knit the members of His Church together, is, in making them dependent one on another; the greatest minister that ever was dependent on the weakest saint for power in his ministry, as we see here; “*and FOR ME, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth*

boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak." When Paul was sent forth of God anywhere, he went dependent on the prayers of the saints — "Brethren, *pray* for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified." Whilst he had a great gift of ministry for the comfort and edification of the saints, he felt his dependence on their prayers for the profitable exercise of it. Whether he was "afflicted," or whether he was "comforted," it was for their sakes, for their "consolation and salvation," and they in turn were "helping together by *prayer*" for him. (See 2 Cor. i.) Just as the eye, the ear, the foot, the hand, are all necessary (1 Cor. xii. 14-26) in the natural body, so we read of the Church the body of Christ, that "fitly joined *together* and compacted by that which

every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of *every part*, it maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephes. iv.) Thus the very feeblest saint *has his place* in the Church, as well as the most highly gifted, but the blessing that each is *practically* to it depends on personal communion, not on gift; we cannot have light without oil. It is quite true that God gives as He sees fit, "dividing to every man severally as He will," but it is only as we are kept in humble dependence on Him that there is real profit in any thing.

"*Praying always,*" &c. If we are not walking in the Spirit, Satan will turn even our very cares and duties into occasions of sin, by making us do them in the wrong time or in the wrong way. He will seek to make our duties and our prayers conflict, because he knows that it is only as they are done in a prayerful spirit that we shall have

blessing in them. If otherwise there may be much busy activity, it will but deaden the soul. If you say, "I cannot pray, I cannot find God's presence now," it is just the very time you need to pray; where will you find strength? in staying away? No. When people say they cannot find God's presence, the truth is very generally that they *have* found it, and that it has discovered to them the evil, careless, unprofitable state in which they were before, though they did not know it then because they were not in His presence. There may be distraction of thought, but let not that hinder your "praying," it is the very thing which shows you have a need to be supplied. Why is there this distraction? because your mind has become occupied with other things beside the Lord. Go to Him; you may whilst in this state have less freedom in your prayers; the joy you would otherwise have had may be denied, yet you will return

with profit, and more power of communion.

You will be humbled, and is there no profit in being humbled? yes, very great; for grace, whilst it humbles, always encourages.

The Lord is ever "a sanctuary," a "hiding place for his children;" but in order habitually to realize this there must be the "*praying always,*" the "*watching thereunto.*" We hear people say continually, "I am able to look up to God in the midst of my work." This may be very true, but can you say that you are thus able to look up to God at any time in the midst of distraction of mind? No; it is only by carrying the presence of God with you into your work that you can do so. It is true that the grace of God often abounds over our carelessness, but it is by the habitual power of communion that we can fly to God at any time. We never can tell in the be-

ginning of the day *when* and *how* a difficulty may arise during the course of it; it is only by having the presence of God with us to suggest right thoughts and words, by living in the power of communion, that we shall be able to meet it when it occurs. Then in every place, in every company, we may "hide" "in the secret of His presence from the strife of tongues" around. Better never enter into company at all, even with Christians, if we do not take our hiding-place with us.

Accordingly as we are filled with the Holy Ghost, shall we be able to look up *steadfastly* into heaven. We may go on carelessly—return back to God and find grace; He may quicken, refresh, and stir up our souls; but it will not be with us as if we had walked in the strength and power of communion.

The presence of the Holy Ghost ever makes us find out fresh short-com-

ings, some dark shade unknown before, but then Jesus is now in the presence of God for us, and thus, whilst we learn our own emptiness, we practically learn what is the fulness, the riches of the grace of God.

Is there no joy in having fellowship with the Spirit of Christ in the things his heart is occupied about here? Yes, great joy! Then "*pray always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints,*" &c.; but let us remember that it is only by being rooted and grounded, and made to stand in *grace*, that we can do this.

Heaven is to us the place of grace. I could never have looked to God at all but for grace; and it is only as our hearts are "established with grace," that they are set at liberty in the wide field of love, to embrace and supplicate for "all saints." May we learn more of the breadth, and

length, and depth, and height of that grace. Knowing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord;" "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature!" may we practically be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

It is very hard for us to see ourselves and Satan to be as nothing, and God to be everything. The moment we get out of dependence on God, we find out our own weakness. We may perhaps think that one good battle with Satan, and all will be over; but no such thing,—we have the security of victory, but no cessation from conflict till the Lord comes. Then Satan will be bound, and then we shall have the full result of victory; but now we are called to unceasing dependence, moment by moment to be reckoning on

the grace and strength of God. Where there is not this dependence there is not blessing, joy, and comfort. The tendency of the flesh is ever to get out of it, and then we have not strength with us in the battle; but have to learn our need of grace through weakness and failure, instead of in joy and confidence in God.

SINCE Thou, my Lord, art nigh,
 Foes I may well defy,
 Strong is Thine arm ;
 Since grace and truth are thine,
 Wisdom and love divine—
 Triumph and peace are mine :
 Nothing shall harm.

Nothing shall greatly move
 Those who Thy kindness prove,
 Blessed alone ;
 Strong their Redeemer is,
 Greatness and grace are His,
 This, and far more than this,
 Lord, is Thine own.

Then let Thy favour be
 Dearer than life to me,
 Be Thy name dear ;
 When foes against me fight,
 Then raise Thine arm of might,
 Then save Thy worm from flight,
 Save him from fear.

CHRIST THE SERVANT, AND THE SERVICE OF LIFE.

John i. 1-18. 1 John i. ii. 1-6.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John i. 1, 2, 14.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”

1 John i. 1-3.

THIS manifestation of the Son—the coming of “the eternal life, which was with the Father,” into the world,

was in order to make known the Father, and to take us along with himself into fellowship with the Father. The One who "was with God, and was God," "humbled himself," "took upon him the form of a servant," and came down here that we might be partakers of his nature.

As to the manner of his coming into this world, that was altogether unexpected. John had testified of his greatness;* but that he who was the brightness of his Father's Glory, "the express image of His person," should come in all the lowliness in which he did, taking into connection with his own person our nature, that was altogether unexpected.

There are many reasons why he thus took flesh, besides the great one of shedding his own blood for the putting away of sin. As a great Prophet, he came to speak in a language familiar to us, all the great secrets of the Father:

* John i. 15.

God raised up a Prophet *like unto us* that human lips might declare the great secrets of the Father's bosom. Again, he came that he might work the works of the Father, walking about among the children of men only that he might "declare" God.

He was "the *living* bread that came down from heaven"—"made flesh," not only that he might shed his blood to put away sin, but also communicate his *life*.—"I am the *living* bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall *live* for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the *life* of the world"—"Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath *eternal life*."—"He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *dwelleth* in me, and I in him."

This wondrous person, the Son of God, coming from "the bosom of the Father"—from heaven, thus declared to our faith, ever spake of himself as

having no connection with the earth except, as such, in blessing a revolted world. How invariably he speaks as having no purpose here save as the "sacrifice for sin" to redeem that which belonged to him, and as the "sent" one to reveal that which had been kept secret till then, giving a capacity to know and understand the Father. He came from heaven to speak of heaven. Over and over again these are his mysterious words: "Ye are *from beneath*"—(he that is of the earth speaketh of the earth, John iii. 31, 32) but "I am *from above*." He was ever the "Son of man which *is in heaven*" and as such "declared" the Father who was in heaven. He spake not of himself save as the "sent" one of God—the servant of the Father. The value was in the *message* not the messenger;—all his thoughts were upon the one he came to "declare."—I seek not mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth: he never sought himself. As one with the

Father ere the world was—His “delight” from everlasting, he came into the world to speak of that which was from the beginning, from all eternity—to “declare” the secrets of the bosom of the Father, which he alone knew. Yet he was not so much the messenger of grace, as the *very* grace of the message.

As the mysterious stranger, passing thus along the earth, he was unknown by the *natural* man—His countrymen asked, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” others said, “We *know not* whence he is.” But there were some who by the Spirit of God were able to discern him as “the sent” of God—“the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” “to them gave he power to become the *sons of God*, even to them that *believe* on his name, —who were *born* not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*.”

The eye that saw him looked on

glory, the ear that listened to him heard of *heaven*, the hand that touched him laid hold on "*eternal life*." The Son was manifested to communicate that which he revealed,—He presented himself to the eye, the ear, the touch, there was "*eternal life*" in seeing, hearing, handling this "Word of life." When the eye of a poor sinner rested on him in spiritual discernment, it let in the light of heaven—the "*life*" of him whom it discerned; when the ear heard, it communicated to the heart that which it heard; when the hand touched, virtue went out of Him; every sense that became sensitive to Jesus—had to do with "*life*"—the very "*eternal life*" which was in God.

In speaking of these things we must of course, not forget that they are made known to us as pardoned sinners; "*eternal life*" could not have been communicated ere the removal of guilt and the possession of positive righteousness. Until after the *blood had*

been shed they knew but little of the meaning of these words, “*Blessed* are your eyes, *for they see,*” &c. But what did they see? “the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;” and what they saw, and heard, and touched, they received,—“the *eternal life* which was in the bosom of the Father.”

Coming from “the bosom of the Father” as this mysterious one, what had he to do with the world—with its associations:—nothing! He walked *in* it, but he was not *of* it. Here for a little while on the errand of love, he was separate from all its maxims, all its habits. It is not that he did not mingle in its busy, and vain, and guilty scenes—but when there, his thoughts, his feelings, were ever with the Father; He was “from above”—his place, the presence of the Father.

Beloved, I pray you notice these words of our Lord when speaking of his people—“*They are not of the*

world, even as I am not of the world!”—It is not as though he gave a commandment unto them that they should strive to be heavenly—but he says “*they are not of the world!*” By birth, by being, they *are* heavenly—“*born from above!*” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” The man that hath this breath of heaven communicated to him, is constituted a *heavenly* person. Jesus often said to the Jews—“I am from above”—“I am not of this world”—“*ye know not whence I am.*”—He knew whence he was and whither he was going, others did not. So with the saints—“Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God*: therefore the world *knoweth us not*, because it knew him not. Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not *yet* appear what we shall be: but *we know* that, when he shall appear, we shall be like

him, for we shall see him as he is.”— We *have* really *life* from God—*are* born from above, and go thither, though undiscerned by others; is not this the meaning of those words—“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but *canst not tell* whence it cometh, and whither it goeth, *so is every one* that is born of the Spirit”? We are “from above”—no more “of this world” than Christ is “of this world.” Ask a christian man *whence* he has come—his answer ought to be in the language of Christ—“I am *from above!*” that which is true of Christ, is true of those who are his, though it is undiscerned by others *whence* they come, and *whither* they go. Dear brethren, this is not a mere title, but a reality; not a shadow, but a substance. We are not *reformed* men,—men *changed* so as to have *better* thoughts and *better* feelings, but those who are “*born of God*”—“*sons and daughters* of the Lord God Al-

mighty!" substantially in possession of that *life* which was in the beginning in the bosom of the Father. It is a birth from heaven. Thus should we feel with regard to the world in which we are—"I am from above!"

Again: What is the language of Jesus in John xvii.?—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." *Whence* came he into the world?—From Nazareth? No; but "from above,"—"from heaven,"—"from the bosom of the Father." We are "sent" *whence* he came, "not of the world," even as he was not of it,—"given" to him out of it,—"begotten of God." The service to which we are sent, that of Christ, to serve for a little while here, in all love and self-denial, waiting, beloved, as having come from God, waiting till the Lord comes to take us to himself, to be for ever with him.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle speaks of Melchisedec,—he

comes abruptly no one knows *whence*; he returns no one knows *whither*. The mysterious stranger: he comes to the exhausted Abraham, giving him bread and wine to refresh his fainting soul; and having executed his mission of *blessing*, he is again lost sight of: so Christ came,—“without beginning of days;” “without descent,” “made flesh;” but then the eternal Word—the eternal Son of God—undiscerned except by the faithful, of whom Abraham was the type,—receiving the rent flesh and shed blood of God’s lamb, and paying the homage to priesthood and royalty combined, which the tithes implied.

What we need in mediation is one thoroughly acquainted *with the Father*, with all his thoughts and feelings, and yet able to sympathise *with us*. Connect one coming out from God, from the holy secret of His presence—one with God—the other, from among the sorrows and infirmity of the people,

as Aaron, one with man, and you get the priesthood of the Lord Jesus—
 “made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Taken into union with such an one, —with this stranger, this blessed Son of God, what are we? what he was—
 “*not of this world.*”

It is true that all the restlessness and the questionings of the heart must be settled before we can search into this glory; but, dear brethren, though feeling our own wretchedness, had we the distinct apprehension that we are “born of God,” thus taken up into union with the *heavenly* stranger, when getting the comfort of this in our own souls, the question would be—
 “What am I to do: what am I to think about, as regards occupation in this world? The moral man takes his own course in a respectable way—Is the Christian, as the reformed man, merely to become more moral than he was before,—to conduct himself

with more propriety? No! directly he *knows* that he is “born from above” —“born of God,” he feels that by nature, by birth, he is higher than angels! —higher than Gabriel! (Gabriel is but a *servant* though an exalted and glorious one,—we *children—sons and daughters* of the Lord God Almighty.) The question must then be “How shall I walk worthy of being a *son* of God?” “Wherefore am I left here, *in* the world as not *of* it?” well might he ask —“As thou has sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world.” What are the thoughts and feelings, what the impulses and necessities of this *heaven-born* man,—what his objects? My brethren, would that I could impress upon your souls as on my own these words—“*sent into the world,*” —they do so plainly declare to us a previous taking out of it. We are heavenly men in heaven, though left here—not as to our affections merely but as to our nature, it is “from above,”

we are “born from above,” made partakers of the *life* of him who dwelt in the bosom of the Father—who was “the Son of man” which is in heaven, “though made flesh” here.

Just then in the same proportion as that *life* is developed in us, shall we have thoughts, and feelings, and motives, like his;—his desires, his delights and affections, will become the necessities of the new nature. It is “Christ *in* us.”

And what did he, when here, but take the shepherd’s staff, feed, guide, and keep his “sheep” together. Where did his thoughts ever rest?—On those whom the Father had given him—his “sheep” and “lambs:” they were the objects of his constant solicitude—his tender care. At the close of his ministry, he prays—“Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we. *While I was with them in the world, I kept*

them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I kept," &c. Whether in life or death, he came to "gather together in one the *children of God* scattered abroad." Gathering them out of the world—bringing them out of evil,—watching, and praying for them—waiting upon them—explaining to them about the Father; this, this was his object while here: and it was not his way *then* only, it is his way *still!* When leaving the world, he said to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" What was this for? Something for himself? No! When the heart answers, "Thou knowest that I love thee," his claim is, "*Feed my sheep! feed my lambs!*" Such is his charge to Peter;—such, to each of us. He has not only given himself, but he would claim all the grace he has communicated on behalf of his "sheep" and "lambs"—"*feed my sheep.*"

It was this for which he came, knowing and acting according to his

mind, we must look around us,—seek out in this wide world, and see who are the “sheep” and “lambs” of Christ. Whatever form or amount of evil they may be in, they are those upon whom the eye and affections of the “great Shepherd” rest, and they are to be the objects of *our* care. His claim upon us is, “*feed my sheep!*” His desire, their blessing;—their being gathered out into what many of us have proved, though amidst much trial—the comfort of *brotherly love*. It is no question as to what is the character of the children of God: they are loved by him. Ignorant they may be; foolish, obstinate, perverse; but on that account only the *more* needing our ministry of care, and grace, and love.

It is impossible that the impulses of *eternal life* can work in us, save after the pattern of our Master,—of him who is all to us. Look at Jesus. I see him girding himself,—bearing

patiently with the ignorant,—going on his labour of love,—washing the feet of his disciples, until it brought out, “not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!”

This is the place in which we are called to stand. “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” We are to be debtors to him,—debtors to the service of Christ: but what then? Grace from him leads into service.—His love becomes so shed abroad in our hearts, that the Spirit of service towards those who are around us flows forth and constrains us to “wash their feet.” We may have it said to us, “Thou shalt not wash my feet;” but then Christ ceased not for this.

If we let Christ into our hearts as a servant—*our* servant, we *must* go out in service. It is impossible to discern this grace in him, girding himself to wash our feet, and yet not gird our hearts for service. How can we stand before this stooping, humbled Son of God,

and not humble ourselves! How can we see this and rest! Oh let us be debtors to him for all: love him,—fulfil his desires,—covet to embrace this privilege of doing as he has done! If he wash our feet, virtue goes forth from his touch, and our hearts are moulded into his image in this aspect of grace,—this exercise of love. The grace communicated takes its original form, makes the heart the heart of a servant, and directs it to the same objects as his.

The life of God in the soul, is Love,—When love is shed abroad in the heart, it suppresses all its horrid *selfishness*,—the hateful passions that are there, and the special objects of it will be, those who are given to Jesus of the Father,—his “sheep” and “lambs.”

We have been made partakers of the divine nature, not only that we might be happy in being blessed ourselves, but also to have the happiness

of seeing others made happy, and this is the happiness of love—pure love, which loves where there is nothing loveable in the thing loved.

Well, when they will let us, we should serve them; when they will not, still follow them with love. What are we doing? I see the Church of God mixed up with darkness,—the saints, amidst every kind of corruption, glittering like pieces of silver in the midst of dust: I read—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” What must I do?—Gather them out? In Luke xv. we see Christ as the evangelist, gathering the sheep and resting their soul: in Matt. xviii. 12, 13, seeking to restore. Our services may differ, but the impulses of love cannot stop. Is there a child of God backsliding: the impulse of *eternal life* is to wash his feet. Supposing he reject my love,—let me persevere, till the answer is,

“Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.” Are saints in evil?—wait on them, if near enough,—if out of reach, write to them,—if at the end of the world, still send after them—in order to keep up the healthful circulation of life and love. It is true that the character of our service would differ, but our desire ought to be the same,—“*to gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad.*” Wherever a child of God is, however blinded by prejudice, the impulse of eternal life must reach. But love cannot stop even here. What will it be by and bye? On what does the heart of Christ rest? *All* “the children of God scattered” abroad,—“*all saints.*” His heart, his care, embraces *all*. While we rest, in spirit, upon his bosom, we are compassed about with *infirmities*. He bears “*all saints*” upon his heart, glistening as *bright* stones on the breastplate before the Father, exhibiting the end to which they are

predestined, as "*heirs of glory.*" A sister in the Lord was led to read Rom. xvi.: she pored over it for some time without making any thing of it, till at last the record of Phebe, and the many other saints of God, who had passed away from this world, awakened the thought of *her own association with them*, and pressed on her soul the blessedness of identification with *living* saints, and the *privilege* of ministering to them in love.

What have we to do with circumstances? Is Satan stronger than Christ? Is the *eternal life* to be checked?—Let our hearts go forth, not in sectarianism, but in service to *all* saints. Wherever there is a child of God, whatever his circumstance or condition, it is still—"feed my sheep—feed my lambs!" The impulse of eternal life extends to *all* that are Christ's, whether near where my personal acts can reach them, or distant where letters of kindness are the only means it may be of

ministering to them, it is still "*feed my sheep!*"

This service of love is not only for those who have any special gift, there is not one who knows the love where-with he has been loved that has not received the commission—"*feed my sheep!*" Oh, if you can discern the love of Christ in stooping at your feet, there is not a morsel, a particle of that love in your soul which does not respond to that word, "*feed my sheep!*" This meets the selfishness and coldness of our hearts—does the thought of his love press on your soul, it must be accompanied with that word,—"*feed my sheep!*" It may be we shall have to do so amid scorn, amid harsh response, but what then? All *his* love was spent on the unworthy, the undeserving. How did "the eternal *life*" manifested among men act? how were its energies spent? what path did it tread? Was it that of taking ease, forgetful of the "sheep?" No! but in seeking out, waiting upon,

washing the feet of the unworthy, undeserving children of God. Oh let us take no ease! Remember he is *girded*; and his claim upon us, upon each of us is, "*if I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet.*"

I say not what may be attained; we wait for the coming of the Lord; should we not desire to be found of him, with our loins girded about, washing the feet of his disciples?

Love, like the stone cast into the water, forms one circle, and then another, and then another around it. The principle that locks two souls together cannot be satisfied until it embraces *all*. Wherever there is but one stray or diseased sheep of the flock of Christ, let us remember that word, "*feed my sheep!*"

The Lord give us to see our place; it will be to say, "death works in us, but life in you." But would you not desire to have his *love* so shed abroad

in your hearts that not one *selfish* thought should remain? Oh for grace to crucify self!

PRINCE of life, and first-born brother
 Of the chosen family,—
 Brightness of the Father's glory,
 All Whose fulness dwells in Thee,—
 God and kinsman,
 We extol Thy majesty.

Gladly with Thee we will suffer,
 Since we hope with Thee to reign;
 Keep us, then, as servants mindful
 Of our Master's toil and pain,
 Till we see Thee,
 In Thy glory, come again.

THE CROSS.

“God forbid that I should glory, *save* in THE CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—Gal. vi. 14.

I WOULD say a few words on the entire *end of self* in THE CROSS,—the *nothingness* to which it reduces us. How little do we know practically of this. Let us look at Jesus, and then learn how very little our souls have realized its power in thus *setting ourselves aside*.

We see in him one who had all human righteousness; and one too in whom “dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;” yet what path did he take?—what was THE CROSS to him?—to what did it reduce him? The *entire setting aside* of all this human righteousness,—of all this divine power. The perfect strength of

his love was proved, not only in that he “did not please himself;” though “in the form of God,” and thinking it “not robbery to be equal with God,” that he emptied himself, and “being found in fashion as a man,” humbled himself to take the place of our disobedience; but that in *this* place of *love* he was content to be *utterly rejected!*—to be reduced to nothing, that *love* might shine out!

The flesh in us is subtle, very subtle: if we show love, we expect that it will be felt; but if otherwise,—if, when we have rendered a kindness, we get no return—not even a kind word, our hearts grow faint and cold in the exercise of love. Do we know what it is when our hearts have gone forth in love to meet with that which we read of in Corinthians,—“Though the more I love you, the less I be loved:” to find that the only consequence of humiliation is to become thereby less respected, more humbled

still. Thus it was with Jesus,—full of patience and tenderness, he exposed himself to the power and malice of Satan. But what did he find in us, when doing this work of love? *Man* took occasion, by his very lowliness, to treat him with the utmost scorn. He was “the reproach of men, the despised of the people.” They kept him in on every side: “Dogs have compassed me about; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet:” “many bulls have compassed me about; fat bulls of Bashan have beset me round, they gaped upon me with their mouth as a ravening and a roaring lion.” He looked for comforters, but found none. One of those with whom he had “taken sweet counsel,” lifted up his heel against him; and even that disciple who had been most forward to declare his adhesion—“Though all men should forsake thee, *yet will not I,*” denied him with oaths and curses.

There was no outlet to his grief, no comfort from man; and here we see the meaning of that,—be not *thou* far from me, *O my God!* Cast out by the scorn of those whom he came to in love, pressed upon, closed in by those whom he came to save,—his soul turned to God: “My God, be thou not far from me!” but God had hid his face from him,—“*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” He now found the darkness and wrath that came upon him to the uttermost; there was no response on any side: the deep hatred of man around, and from above darkness also; every thing was set aside but the power of *love*. “I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I come into *deep waters* where the *floods* overflow me.” The *waves* and the *billows* went over him,—*all* was lost in the waves *but* love; it was that which sustained him: love was greater than all; and it was set *on us*.

When we see what he, as emptied, was, we come to the depth of *love*. If he emptied himself of every thing else, there was still the fulness of love, for He is God, and "*God is love.*" We, dear brethren, have found the *fulness of love* in Jesus, and that shall be our everlasting portion,—we shall know, shall taste, this *love* for ever.

When Jesus was "going about" here, it was as "doing good;" he could not restrain his *power*, though ever so lowly and humbled, when good was to be done; he was obliged to shew it. Thus in the life of Jesus, in his actings here, there was something which the natural heart must own, must approve; we like to have our diseases cured, and when they saw the dead raised, they could rejoice in having their deceased friends brought to life again; but in THE CROSS there was no putting forth of this *power*, there was no miracle—nothing but

weakness and degradation—he was “*crucified through weakness.*” Trial from man, temptation from Satan, desertion of God,—there was nothing to be seen but *love*, the depth, the fulness, the riches of that love which will be our happy, blessed portion for ever.

The natural heart in every one of us hates the power of THE CROSS. We want something for the eye to rest upon, we seek a little honour here; THE CROSS stains all the pride of human glory, and therefore we like it not. Let us test ourselves, beloved, are we really content to take THE CROSS in this its power, and to say, “I want nothing else.” “God forbid that I should glory, *save* in THE CROSS of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is *crucified* unto me, and I unto the world!” May our souls rest in this blessed confidence—Jesus is our everlasting portion; to dwell in him is to dwell in God, and “God is

love." Many Christians are cherishing those things which keep them from knowing the full power of this *love* in their hearts. We cannot enjoy love and pride together. Whatever nourishes *self*, no matter what, honour, talents, learning, wealth, friends, respectability, any thing, every thing which the natural man delights in, *nourishes pride in us, renders Christ less precious, and the enjoyment of his love less full.*

The Lord give us to know what it is to be "*crucified to the world.*" Let us, beloved brethren, bless God for every thing that *puts down self.*

HYMN.

THE CROSS! the CROSS! O that's our gain,
Because on that the Lamb was slain;
'Twas there the Lord was crucified,
'Twas there for us the Saviour died.

What wondrous cause could move Thy heart,
To take on Thee our curse and smart,
Well knowing we should ever be
So cold, so negligent of Thee!

The cause was love,—we sink with shame
Before our blessed Jesu's name;
That He should bleed and suffer thus,
Because He loved and pitied us.

THE PEACE OF THE SANCTUARY.

HEB. ix. 24-28.

As soon as our souls have found Jesus as the Christ, the moment we are able to recognize him as such, to say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 16), we belong to the family of faith — "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*" (1 John v. 1.)

This the natural mind could never recognize when Jesus was here in the world ; it discerned him not according to the thoughts of God. To the eyes of men he was ever "the root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness ;" some said one thing, some another ; they knew not who he was ; they acknowledged not, nor received him as "the Son of God," but despised and

rejected him. It was the instructed heart alone, the heart which required comfort, and knew its need of grace and rest, that found in Jesus what it wanted : such alone could look on him as the Christ of God and say, "Master, to whom shall we go? *thou* hast the words of eternal life."

And this is ever the relation of faith to the person of the Son of God : we may be ignorant about the walk ; nay, we may perhaps not even understand much about the preciousness of his blood ; but if our souls are fixed by faith on the person of Jesus as the Son of God, that word is written for us—"*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.*"

Jesus was sent into the world to *save*—"to seek and to save that which was lost," those who had nothing that was good in themselves, and therefore "it pleased the Lord to bruise him"—to "make his soul an offering for sin." (Is. liii. 10.)

This is the subject of testimony to a lost and ruined world ; but supposing, dear friends, that we *have* believed on Jesus, that we *have* received the record God has given concerning his Son, then the great lesson of God unto our souls will be, as to the riches of grace which are in that Son. He knows this, He delights in it ; we know it not, and therefore have to learn it. But this learning will often be a very gradual work ; for it is the heart when exercised, when disciplined, and made tender, that is prepared to apprehend that which is provided for it of God.

Now one thing ever present to the mind of God respecting the person of Jesus, is the continual, daily character of grace that was found in him when here. He had to meet the *holiness of God* in every thing. This is what we know scarcely any thing about—the *perfect holiness of God*. We are much better able to

conceive and understand the *love of God*, we feel our need of that ; but of what His *holiness* is, we rarely, if ever, form any adequate conception. Jesus had not only to know it, he had also to meet it, and this he did : but he was the alone one that ever could. There was not an act of Jesus, not a word that escaped his lips, not a sigh nor a smile, no, not even a thought or desire that was contrary to God or inconsistent with his *holiness*.

Now any one who has ever sought at all to walk with God, entirely in the light of His holiness, never to have a will of his own, but ever to be subject to the will of God, may a little understand what this is, and what the difficulties of such a place. We must remember too that this perfect obedience was manifested, as to all outward circumstances, in the distant place of sorrow, and not in the happy presence of God. He was "the scorn" and the "reproach"

of men, "cast down," and "disquieted," obliged to say in his suffering, "O my God, 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." Thus it was the place of distance from God, not in the heart, that never could be, but in suffering; yet *there* it was he had to manifest this perfect, constant obedience, and he could say, "*I have set the Lord always before me.*"

But we see this character of the holiness of God, as known by and displayed in Christ, perhaps even still more on the cross when bearing the *wrath of God*. Now this (the wrath of God) is what we, as saints, can never know; we may know his displeasure, but that is quite another thing. I may be disciplined or chastened as a child (Heb. xii. 5-11), but wrath is that which I can never know. It is the full power of the fire of the holiness of God brought

to bear against sin. *Once has it been already exhibited,—in the cross of Christ; it will be yet once again,—in the second death.*

If we have but a feeble conception of what is the holiness of God, still more so have we of His wrath, and therefore we are but little able to understand all that is meant by “*atonement.*” Just think for a moment what it is to be “*by nature the children of wrath, even as others*” (Ephes. ii. 3). We read that “*the wrath of God abideth on him that believeth not*” (John iii. 30),—that “*the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience*” (Ephes. v. 6, Col. iii. 6),—that “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*” (Rom. i. 18.) Wrath is revealed, truly revealed, but not yet manifested; it only waits the manifestation, and we have been “*delivered from the wrath to come.*”

(1 Thess. i. 10.) As I have said, we know very little of what "*wrath*" is, or of the "*atonement*" which has met, appeased, and for ever put it all away for us.

We have never had the *experience* of wrath, we never can. If we have ever felt the deep bitterness of remorse for sin, we may then, as it were, have learnt a little of the character of it, but the *wrath of God* will never again be *experienced* by any, save by the lost in the second death; for us it *has* been met, borne once and for ever, by Jesus on the cross. This was the end of the life of Jesus, to know in his own person the wrath of God: as the "man of sorrows" he had known much of trial, much of sorrow, ere he came to the cross; but it was there, and in his agony, that he knew what wrath was. On the cross we see him as the *victim*: this was then his special character—"made sin."

Having been the victim, having

“put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” he then entered into the sanctuary as we read in this verse—
“Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, NOW TO APPEAR IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD FOR US.” I know of no more blessed word than that; it leads our souls into the sanctuary of God, as our home, our resting-place. There is nothing so blessed as to be in the presence of God, and that is our portion. The Lord said concerning Aaron—*“that he come not at all times into the holy place, within the vail before the mercy seat which is upon the ark, that he die not;”* but Jesus as our “High Priest” has “entered” into the very “presence of God,” offering there blood which he had shed as the victim;—*there* is he *now manifested* “FOR US,” and wrath does not emanate from that “holy place”—No! peace and reconciliation are there. The offering of the blood

of Jesus HAS appeased the wrath of God, and for ever removed it away on behalf of *all who believe*—NOT for the *world*; to them there is no priest, no sanctuary, no mercy seat, no precious blood, no peace with God; nothing but wrath, unmingled wrath, awaits all such. Any one who is able to say, I have a priest in God's presence, abiding there continually *for me* is surely saved, but Jesus is only thus a priest for those who believe—"now in the presence of God FOR US."

Now observe, dear friends, wrath is appeased for ever, wrath which our consciences tell us we deserve, for every evil of our natural hearts deserves it, there is not one desire of them, not one thought or feeling that does not. And these things remain in one who believes, for in him are found in principle all those very things against which the wrath of God is revealed, they are the workings of our evil *flesh*. Now do you not suppose

that the consciousness of this will spread its influence over the mind of one who discerns its truth, that he will fear the holiness of God being against every thing in himself? May he not say—"Surely wrath must come on me for these things before the priest can represent me and speak to God about me." But *wrath is past away*. This is the testimony of God in the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God came to us from the sanctuary, and not until wrath had been appeased for ever. This is the testimony of God. There is only reconciliation, and peace in the sanctuary. Whatever may happen to us (to the Church) here, nothing can spread one cloud between Jesus and the Father, or mar the love, or alter the peace, and the acceptance, which is the only thought connected with the sanctuary. It is impossible that any thing should ever create a shadow or bring darkness there, should alter the blessed relation in which Jesus stands "FOR

us" towards God. It is most important that we should ever bear this in mind, for Satan seeks by every means to steal from us the confidence of this truth, to deprive our souls of the joy and peace that the sure knowledge of it gives.

It is far more wonderful that the peace of the sanctuary should remain unbroken whilst we are still here in the flesh, than that the joy we shall have in glory should be so ; for the mercy seat in the sanctuary is the place where God deals with us in putting away sin. It is no marvel that when sin is put away for ever, when we are made to bear the image of Jesus, never having one thought or desire contrary to God, not a mark or stain of defilement on us, not one trace of sin left, that then God should be able to dwell with us, and we with him in unceasing joy and peace ; but it is a marvellous truth that we should be able to say that Jesus has entered into the "holy place," and there is

manifested "FOR US," and that because of that we can claim all the peace and joy, the love and blessedness of that "holy place" as our own *now*; that we can know assuredly that God will never deal with us save in love; and that as God looks upon us in his Son, we can say that all that his eye sees there, all that he delights in, is "FOR US."

Such is the firm foundation that God has given to us for our faith to rest on, in order that we might be able rightly to learn what *sin* is, and what *holiness* is, according to his thoughts.

Some saints know but little of these things—they learn God to be their Father, and but little either of their own sin and worthlessness, or of his holiness. When God is leading on a saint, he may place him in circumstances wherein he has to learn the vileness of his own heart and the holiness of God, and that which can alone then meet our need is the know-

ledge of Jesus as the *Priest* in God's presence "FOR US."

Until we know the sanctuary aright, we shall never have true peace. It is in the sanctuary alone that we are able to look down upon ourselves and the circumstances around us here, and judge them according to God. We shall surely then discover what we are in all our vileness and worthlessness, but the knowledge of having Him who is our "advocate" there, will raise us above all these thoughts about ourselves and our own worthlessness, and we shall be able to walk down here as those who possess accomplished blessing.

Let me ask you, Is it not very often the case, that when you feel you have gone astray, you become weak and are cast down? What do you think about the sanctuary, when you are thus conscious of sin and coldness? Is it that there is a cloud *there*—any coldness,—any thing that causes the peace to be altered? Do

you say, I must seek to confess or pray (it matters not what) in order that the cloud may be removed, and peace restored *there*? Romanists say you must offer the sacrifice again, many Protestants, something very like it, that you must re-act faith before the peace of the sanctuary will be restored. But, beloved, that which is never taken away surely can never need to be restored, and if no cloud exist, how can it be removed? You must take heed what you do when there is this consciousness of sin and distance from God on the soul; for all such thoughts as these come immediately from Satan, and go to set aside the priestly ministrations of the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of his blood altogether.

If it were needful to *restore* the peace of the sanctuary, *Christ must offer himself* AGAIN (verses 25, 26); but no, beloved, nothing can ever disturb the peace of *that* "holy place," it *has* been "made," and that

for ever. Jesus has ONCE offered the sacrifice, and “by his own blood entered in ONCE into the holy place, having obtained *eternal* redemption” — He will never do it again, he may speak of that which he has “ONCE” done, as “advocate” appeal to his own precious blood “ONCE” offered, but that is all. Our relation to the “holy place” continues the same; every believer has Christ’s own character of acceptance before God.

As the peace of the sanctuary remains ever unchanged, unbroken, any thought of ours as to that which we must do in order to restore the lost peace, is most dishonouring to God, most contrary to his word. Just as the sun continues ever to shine, so is it with the peace of the sanctuary: clouds may hide from our sight his rays, thick clouds darken, but the sun shines still; and thus when we turn back to God, we find that the sanctuary remains the same unchanged place of blessing. There

may be many causes why we may not always have the apprehension of this. When my child has fallen into the mire, I may chastise him as he ought to be disciplined ; but that does not change my relationship and love to the child, my affection remains unaltered. So is it with us ; thus does God deal with those who belong to the sanctuary, but the peace which is *there* ever remains the same. All flows from the care of our Father over us, even though chastisement and rebuke are ours ; nothing can ever alter the love that is toward us there.

God has but one standard of *holiness*, beloved friends. Our thoughts perhaps are not according to Him, any little thing that we do, our smiles even, or a little word ; all is known in the sanctuary, and it is the advocacy of Jesus which alone keeps the way open for us. Unless there was power and efficacy in his blood, there would inevitably be taint and instant darkness in the sanctuary, let

there be but the smile of contempt, or of compassion where it ought not to be, and it is that which would defile the sanctuary; and if it be so with these little things, how must it be with those greater evils of which we are conscious? But all is taken up in the sanctuary by the advocacy of Jesus: he acts about it above; the question is settled there, and it only remains whether we should be made sensible of it. If so, it is "that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) This God desires, and therefore he chastens his saints and disciplines them.

Now discipline and chastisement are very different things; there may be the former where there is not chastisement at all. The Lord disciplines his saints by the word. Our blessed Lord himself was disciplined. So too Paul—the illness of Epaphroditus, the trial he had through the saints, as well as the thorn in the flesh, was disciplined to him. God

always disciplines those whom He loves; sometimes it may be through blessings, just as the south wind blows and brings out the perfume of the pleasant spices—as well as the north wind: we may have this happy kind of discipline from many things in our path of service. But sometimes it is needful that we be chastened, and we know what the object then is, that there may be more of the energy of life in our ways.

What is most to be dreaded is, that there should not be this discipline or chastisement from God. I believe there is no severer punishment than this; no greater proof of the Lord's displeasure than for a saint to be given up to his own forwardness and wilfulness. (Hosea iv. 17.) But God does not forsake his saints even then; the sanctuary is still their place, though they may be insensible of it. A saint may go on thus for a long time in his own wicked, perverse ways, nay, he may

be allowed to do so without finding out the evil of them unto the end ; but in the glory, when he knows as he is known, he will be able to take a review of and judge his present ways, to say this thing was folly, and that sin. It is not that the remembrance of these things will occasion anything of sorrow or of darkness to him there : he will judge himself from above according to the holiness of God, for then will he be fully partaker of that holiness.

Just in proportion as any saint is able to take this place *now*, judging himself and his ways according to the Spirit of holiness, will he be as a “polished shaft” in the hands of God, used as an instrument of blessing unto others. If I find a soul that has the knowledge of the sanctuary, the right knowledge of the *golden** sanctuary,—one who knows

* Gold being that which represents the nature of God, as seen in the type of the tabernacle.

what is heavenly, and seeks to bring others to holiness of walk, I shall surely find that it will exhibit and communicate that character of blessing wherever its influence extends. The Holy Spirit does not merely lead us to the knowledge of that love which sent forth the Son, but he teaches us according to what is going on in the sanctuary *now*, the thoughts of Jesus and of the Father. He brings the saints into thoughts and apprehension about the things which are passing *here* as they are regarded by the "Advocate" and God above. That too is our work as seeking to minister the one to the other.

I would just say in conclusion, that there is nothing we shall find practically more deeply important than that we should be living for the Church. If we are living for ourselves, we shall most surely lose all that precious discipline, all that knowledge and instruction which God gives to those who are found

living for his Church. Nothing leads to instruction more than connecting ourselves with the Church in the sense in which we are able to say, "*the body of Christ*" (for it must ever be done as discerning that the Church is the body of Christ), then if able to minister unto any of his members, it will be as if we did it unto him. If we believed that word—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto ME:" I say, if we really believed that word, what a mighty influence would it exert upon us! In all our prospects we should be found placing the Church first, ourselves last,—not thinking about our own ways, our own plans,—not living for ourselves, but for the Church. That word "*my*" would not be heard amongst the saints, it would not be consulting about *my* advantage or honour, *my* comfort or ease, the Church would hold the highest place in our

hearts *next* to that of the Lord himself.

If above, in the sanctuary, the condition of the Church here is thus the great subject of thought, so ought it to be, beloved, with us. We may have still to remain in the same place, to abide in the calling wherein we have been called, studying to be quiet, and to do our own business, working with our own hands, &c. : these things are now existing, but the time of discipline will soon be over, and then will the Lord Jesus come with exceeding power and great glory ; “ *unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.*” The peace of the sanctuary will *then* be made fully ours, and we shall *then* be made fully able to enjoy that peace.

Though the thought of the coming and glory of the Lord Jesus be a terrible thought to every thing that is of ourselves, and to every

natural heart, it will have no terror to those who are really knowing the peace of the sanctuary, for those who are able to wait for him who is *now* "in the presence of God FOR US." This is the only thing that can give peace in the prospect of the coming of Jesus. The soul that knows anything of what wrath is, of what sin, and what the holiness of God, will certainly need very simple faith about these things. It is as we are abiding in the sanctuary that we shall realize this peace, and know what it is that keeps it for us; but if we begin to think that the peace is ever broken, or that any thing else, any efforts of our own are necessary to keep it, we shall be wavering and unstable.

Well, beloved friends, it is said that we are to be made like unto Jesus when he comes again;—to bear his image,—to awake up in his likeness,—to have the full peace of the sanctuary for ever as our own; yea, more

than this, to be made diffusers of blessing all around us. As yet redemption has not been applied to creation, it is only known by those who believe, but soon will it be thus applied by the Lord Jesus himself, and we shall be associated with him as diffusers of blessing and of happiness. May these, then, be our prospects. If we find disappointment and trial here, let us remember what God is, and what we as creatures are, that we may be patient, enduring as those who understand the secret thoughts of God about all these things, as able to think of the exceeding glory which awaits us. If allowed to go on in our own self-will we should lose all the power and all the sweetness of the hope of glory, all communion with the thoughts of God here.

Let us then, beloved friends, ever hold fast the peace of the sanctuary; let our own wills be broken, and made subject to his blessed will.