

Food for the Flock.

* * *

“THE WORDS OF THE WISE ARE AS GOADS,
AND AS NAILS FASTENED BY THE MASTER OF ASSEMBLIES,
WHICH ARE GIVEN FROM ONE SHEPHERD.”

* * *

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“ HOLY BRETHREN.”

“ WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, *consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus.” (Heb. iii. 1.)

“ And let us *consider* one another, to provoke unto love and good works.” (Heb. x. 24.)

The two passages we have just penned, are very intimately connected. Indeed they are bound together by the simple fact that the inspired writer makes use of the same word in each ; and, further, that this word occurs only in these two places throughout the whole of this marvellous treatise.* We are to consider Jesus ; and we are to consider all those who belong to

* The English word, “ consider,” occurs four times throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews ; but it represents three different Greek words. In chapter vii. 4, “ Consider how great this man was.” Here the word is θεωρεῖτε, which occurs, in its various inflections, about fifty-six times in the Greek Testament, but only in this one instance is it rendered by the word “ consider.” Its simple and general meaning is to “ see” or “ perceive.”

Again, in Hebrews xii. 3, we have, “ Consider him who endured such contradiction,” &c. Here the word is

Him, wherever they are. These are the two grand departments of our work. We are to apply our minds diligently to Him and to His interests on the earth, and thus be blessedly delivered from the miserable business of thinking about ourselves or our own interests; a morally glorious deliverance, most surely, for which we may well praise our glorious Deliverer.

However, before proceeding to the great subjects which we are called to consider, we must dwell, for a little, on the wonderful title bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon all believers—all true Christians. He calls them, "holy brethren." This, truly, is a title of great moral dignity. He does not say, we *ought to be* holy. No; he says we *are*. It is a question of the title or standing of every child of God on the face of the earth. No doubt, having through sovereign grace this holy standing, we ought to be holy in our walk; our moral condition ought ever to answer to our title. We should never allow a thought, word, or act, in the smallest degree inconsistent with our high position as "holy brethren." Holy thoughts, holy words, holy actings are alone

ἀναλογίσασθε, which occurs only in this place throughout the entire New Testament, and expresses the idea of comparison or analogy.

But in the two verses which stand at the head of this paper, the word is *κατανοίω*, which has an intensive force, and signifies an earnest application of the mind.

suitèd to those upon whom infinite grace has bestowed the title of “holy brethren.”

Let us never forget this. Let us never say, never think, that we cannot maintain such a dignity, or live up to such a standard. The very same grace which has bestowed upon us the dignity, will ever enable us to support it; and we shall see, in the progress of this paper, how this grace acts—the mighty moral means used to produce a practical walk in accordance with our holy calling.

But let us inquire on what does the apostle ground the title of “holy brethren”? It is of all possible importance to be clear as to this. If we do not see that it is wholly independent of our state, our walk, or our attainments, we can neither understand the position nor its practical results. We may assert with all confidence that the very holiest walk that ever was exhibited in this world, the highest spiritual state that ever was attained, could never form the basis of such a position as is set forth in the title of which we speak. Nay, more; we are bold to affirm that not even the work of the Spirit in us, blessedly essential as it is in every stage of the divine life, could entitle us to enter upon such a dignity. Nothing in us, nothing of us, nothing about us could ever form the foundation of such a standing as is set forth in the title “holy brethren.”

On what then is it grounded? Heb. ii. 11

furnishes the reply. "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one : for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*" Here we have one of the most profound and comprehensive statements of truth contained within the covers of the divine volume. It is simply marvellous! Here we see how we become "holy brethren;" even by association with that blessed One who went down into death for us, and who, in resurrection, has become the foundation of that new order of things in which we have our place; the Head of that new creation to which we belong; the First-born among the many brethren of whom He is not ashamed, inasmuch as He has placed them on the very same platform with Himself, and brought them to God not only in the perfect efficacy of His work, but in all His own perfect acceptability and infinite preciousness. "The sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one."*

* It is a fact of deepest interest that, to "Mary Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils," was granted the privilege of announcing to the disciples the glad tidings of the new and wondrous relationship into which they were introduced. "Go"—said the risen Saviour—"to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto *my Father*, and *your Father*; and to *my God* and *your God.*" It is John who, by the Holy Ghost, records this profoundly interesting fact.

Never before had such an announcement been made—never before could it have been made. But now the great

Wonderful words! let the reader ponder them. Let him specially note the vast, yea, the immeasurable difference between these two words “Sanctifier and sanctified.” Such was our blessed Lord, personally, intrinsically, in His humanity, that He was capable of being the Sanctifier. Such were we personally, in our moral condition, in our nature, that we needed to be the sanctified. But—eternal and universal homage to His name!—such is the perfection of His work, such the “riches” and the “glory” of His grace, that it can be said, “As he is so are we in this world”—“The sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one”—all on one common ground, and that for ever.

Nothing can exceed this as to title and standing. We stand in all the glorious results of His accomplished work, and in all the acceptance of His Person. He has linked us with Himself, in resurrection-life, and made us sharers of all He has and all He is, save His deity, which was of course incommunicable.

But let us note, very particularly, all that is involved in the fact that we *needed* to be “sanctified.” It sets forth in the clearest and most forcible manner, the total, hopeless, absolute ruin

work was done, the battle was over, the victory gained, the foundation of the new edifice laid; and Mary Magdalene was made the herald of the most glorious tidings that ever fell on mortal ears.

of every one of us. It matters not, so far as this aspect of the truth is concerned, who we were or what we were, in our personal history or our practical life. We may have been refined, cultivated, amiable, moral and, after a human fashion, religious. Or we may have been degraded, demoralised, depraved, the very scum of society. In a word, we may have been, morally and socially, as far apart as the poles; but, inasmuch as all needed to be sanctified, the highest as well as the lowest, ere we could be addressed as "holy brethren," there is evidently "no difference." The very worst needed nothing more; and the very best could do with nothing less. Each and all were involved in one common ruin, and needed to be sanctified, or set apart, ere we could take our place amongst the "holy brethren." And now, being set apart, we are all on one common ground; so that the very feeblest child of God on the face of the earth belongs, as really and truly, to the "holy brethren" as the blessed apostle Paul himself. It is not a question of progress or attainment, precious and important as it most surely is to make progress; but simply of our common standing before God, of which the "Firstborn" is the blessed and eternal definition.

But we must here remind the reader of the vast importance of being clear and well-grounded as to the relationship of the "Firstborn" with the

“many brethren.” This is a grand foundation truth, as to which there must be no vagueness or indecision. Scripture is clear and emphatic on this great cardinal point. But there are many who will not listen to scripture. They are so full of their own thoughts that they will not take the trouble to search and see what scripture says on the subject. Hence you find many maintaining the fatal error that incarnation is the ground of our relationship with the Firstborn. They look upon the Incarnate One as our “Elder Brother,” who, in taking human nature upon Him, took us into union with Himself, or linked Himself on to us.

Now, we do not believe it lies within the compass of human language to set forth, in adequate terms, the frightful consequences of such an error as this. In the first place, it involves a positive blasphemy against the Person of the Son of God, a denial of His absolutely spotless, sinless, perfect manhood. He, blessed be His name, was such in His humanity, that the angel could say to the virgin of Him, “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” His human nature was absolutely holy. As a man, He knew no sin. He was the only man that ever lived of whom this could be said. He was unique. He stood absolutely alone. There was—there could be—no union with Him in incarnation. How could the holy

and the unholy, the pure and the impure, the spotless and the spotted ever be united, ever be amalgamated? Utterly impossible! Those who think or say they could, do greatly err, not knowing the scriptures or the Son of God.

But, further, those who speak of union in incarnation are, most manifestly, the enemies of the cross of Christ; for what need was there of the cross, the death, or the blood of Christ, if sinners could be united to Him in incarnation? Surely none whatever. There was no need of atonement, no need of propitiation, no need of the substitutionary sufferings and death of Christ, if sinners could be united to Him without them.

Hence we see how entirely this system of doctrine is of Satan. It dishonours the Person of Christ and sets aside His precious atonement. And, in addition to all this, it overthrows the teaching of the entire Bible on the subject of man's guilt and ruin. In short, it completely sweeps away all the great foundation-truths of our glorious Christianity, and gives us instead a godless, Christless, infidel system. This is what the devil has ever been aiming at; it is what he is aiming at still; and thousands of so-called Christian teachers are acting as his agents on the terrible business of seeking to abolish Christianity. Tremendous fact for all whom it may concern!

But let us reverently hearken to the teaching

of holy scripture on this great subject. What mean those words which fell from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ, and are repeated for us by God the Holy Ghost: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth *alone*”? Who was this corn of wheat? Himself, blessed be His holy name! He had to die in order to “bring forth much fruit.” If He was to surround Himself with His “many brethren,” He had to go down into death in order to take out of the way every hindrance to their eternal association on the new ground of resurrection. He, the true David, had to go forth single-handed to meet the terrible foe, in order that He might have the deep joy of sharing with His brethren, the spoils of His magnificent victory. Eternal hallelujahs to His peerless name!

There is a very beautiful passage bearing upon our subject in Mark viii. We shall quote it for the reader. “And he began to teach them, that the Son of man *must suffer* many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and *be killed*, and after three days rise again. And he spake that saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.” In another gospel we are told what Peter said: “Pity thyself, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.” Mark the Lord’s reply — mark His attitude: “But when he had turned about and *looked on his disciples*, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee

behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

This is perfectly beautiful! It not only presents a truth to the understanding, but lets in upon the heart a bright ray of the moral glory of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, eminently calculated to bow the soul in worship before Him. "He turned and looked upon his disciples." It is as though He would say to His erring servant, "If I adopt your suggestion—if I pity myself, what will become of these?" Blessed Saviour! He did not think of Himself. "He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," well knowing what awaited Him there. He went to the cross, and there endured the wrath of God, the judgment of sin, all the terrible consequences of our condition, in order to glorify God with respect to our sins, and that He might have the ineffable and eternal joy of surrounding Himself with the "many brethren" to whom He could, on resurrection-ground, declare the Father's name. "*I will declare thy name unto my brethren.*" He looked forward to this from amid the awful shadows of Calvary, where He was enduring for us what no created intelligence can ever fathom. If ever He was to call us "brethren," He must, *all alone*, meet death and judgment on our behalf.

Now, why all this if incarnation was the basis

of our union or association?*

Is it not perfectly plain to the reader that there could be no link between Christ and us save on the ground of accomplished atonement? How could there be a link with sin unatoned for, guilt uncanceled, the claims of God unanswered? Utterly impossible. To maintain such a thought is to fly in the face of divine revelation, and sweep away the very foundations of Christianity; and this, as we very well know, is precisely what the devil is ever aiming at.

However, we shall not pursue the subject further here. It may be that the great majority of our readers are thoroughly clear and settled on the point, and that they hold it as a great cardinal and essential truth. Still, we feel it of importance just now, to bear a very distinct testimony to the whole church of God on this most blessed subject. We feel persuaded that the error which

* We do not mean to convey the idea that union with Christ as Head of the body is taught in Hebrews ii. 11. For the unfolding of that glorious truth we must look elsewhere. It comes not within the range of the epistle to the Hebrews. (See Eph. i. 22, 23; v. 30.) But whether we view Him as Head of the body, or as the Firstborn among many brethren, Scripture most distinctly and emphatically teaches us that the death of the cross was absolutely essential to our union or association with Christ. *No death, no union.* The corn of wheat had to fall into the ground and die, in order to bring forth much fruit. Stupendous fact! Glorious truth! Profound mystery!

we have been combating—the notion of union with Christ in incarnation—forms an integral part of a vast infidel and antichristian system which holds sway over thousands of professing Christians, and is making fearful progress throughout the length and breadth of Christendom. It is the deep and solemn conviction of this that leads us to call the attention of the beloved flock of Christ to one of the most precious and glorious subjects that could possibly occupy their hearts, namely, their title to be called "holy brethren."

We shall now turn for a few moments to the exhortation addresssd to the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." As we have already observed, we are not exhorted *to be* holy brethren; we are *made* such. The place and the portion are ours through infinite grace, and it is on this blessed fact that the inspired apostle grounds his exhortation: "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus."

The titles bestowed on our blessed Lord in this passage, present Him to our hearts in a very wonderful manner. They take in the wide range of His history from the bosom of the Father down to the dust of death; and from the dust of death back to the throne of God. As the Apostle, He came from God to us; and as the High Priest He has gone back to God for us.

He came from heaven to reveal God to us, to unfold to us the very heart of God, to make us know the precious secrets of His bosom. “God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son [*ἐν υἱῷ*], whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds: who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

What a marvellous privilege to have God revealed to us in the Person of Christ! God has spoken to us in the Son. Our blessed Apostle has given us the full and perfect revelation of God. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” “God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (John i.; 2 Cor. iv.)

All this is unspeakably precious. Jesus has revealed God to our souls. We could know absolutely nothing of God, if the Son had not come and spoken to us. But—thanks and praise to our God!—we can say, with all possible certainty, “*We know that the Son of God is come,*

and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true : and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." We can now turn to the four gospels, and as we gaze upon that blessed One who is there presented to us by the Holy Ghost, in all that lovely grace which shone out in all His words, and works, and ways, we can say, That is God. We see Him going about, doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; and we see him healing the sick, cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, feeding the hungry, drying the widow's tears, weeping at the tomb of Lazarus ; and say, That is God. Every ray of moral glory that shone in the life and ministry of the Apostle of our confession was the expression of God. He was the brightness of the divine glory, and the exact impression of the divine essence.

"Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son ;
God manifest, God seen and heard,
The heaven's belovèd One.

"In Thee most perfectly express'd,
The Father's self doth shine ;
Fulness of Godhead, too ; the Blest—
Eternally Divine."

How precious is all this to our souls! It is simply unspeakable. To have God revealed in the Person of Christ, so that we can know Him, delight in Him, find all our springs in Him, call Him Abba Father, walk in the light of His blessed countenance, have fellowship with Him and with His Son Jesus Christ, know the love of His heart—the very love wherewith He loves the Son. What deep blessedness! What fulness of joy! How can we ever sufficiently praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His marvellous grace in having introduced us into such a sphere of blessing and privilege, and set us in such a wondrous relationship with Himself in the Son of His love? Oh! may our hearts praise Him! May our lives praise Him! May it be the one grand aim and object of our whole *moral being to magnify His name!*

But we must now turn for a little to another great branch of our subject. We have to “Consider the High Priest of our confession.” This, too, is fraught with richest blessing for every one of the “holy brethren.” The same blessed One who, as the Apostle, came to make Him known to our souls, has gone back to God for us. He came to speak to us about God; and He is gone to speak to God about us. He appears in the presence of God for us. He bears us upon His heart continually. He represents us before God, and ever maintains us in the integrity of the position into

which His precious atoning work has introduced us. His blessed priesthood is the divine provision for our wilderness path. Were it merely a question of our standing or title, there would be no need of priesthood; but, inasmuch as it is a question of our actual state and practical walk, we could not get on for one moment, if we had not our great High Priest ever living for us in the presence of God.

Now, there are three most precious departments of our Lord's priestly service, presented in the epistle to the Hebrews. In the first place we read, in chapter iv.: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Christian reader, only think of the deep blessedness of having One at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens who is *touched* with the feeling of your infirmities, who enters into all your sorrows, who feels for you and with you in all your exercises, trials and difficulties. Think of having a Man on the throne of God—a perfect human heart, One on whom you can count in all your weakness, heaviness, and conflict, in everything, in short, except sin. With this, blessed be His name! He can have no sympathy.

But oh! what pen, what human tongue can adequately set forth the deep, deep blessedness of having a Man in the glory whose heart is with us in all the trials and sorrows of our wilderness path? What a precious provision! What a divine reality! The One who has all power in heaven and on earth now lives for us in heaven. We can count on Him, at all times. He enters into all our feelings in a way that no earthly friend could possibly do. We can go to Him and tell Him things which we could not name to our dearest friend on earth, inasmuch as none but He can fully understand us.

But our great High Priest understands all about us. He has passed through every trial and sorrow that a perfect human heart could know. Hence He can perfectly sympathise with us, and He delights to minister to us in all our seasons of sorrow and affliction, when the heart is crushed and bowed beneath a weight of anguish which only He can fully enter into. Precious Saviour! Most merciful High Priest! May our hearts delight in Thee! May we draw more largely upon the exhaustless springs of comfort and consolation that are found in Thy large and loving heart for all Thy tried, tempted, sorrowing, suffering, brethren here below!

In Hebrews vii. 25, we have another, very precious branch of our Lord's priestly work, and that is His intercession—His active intervention

on our behalf, in the presence of God. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

What comfort is here for all the "holy brethren"! What strong consolation! What blessed assurance! Our great High Priest bears us upon His heart continually before the throne. All our affairs are in His blessed hands, and can never fall through. He lives for us, and we live in Him. He will carry us right through to the end. Theologians talk about "the final perseverance of the saints." Scripture speaks of the final perseverance of our divine and adorable High Priest. Here we rest. He says to us, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by *the death of his Son*,"—the only possible way in which we could be reconciled—"much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life;"—that is His life up in heaven. He has made Himself responsible for every one of the "holy brethren," to bring them through all the difficulties, trials, snares and temptations of the wilderness, right home to glory. Universal and everlasting homage to His blessed name!

We cannot, of course, attempt to go elaborately into the great subject of priesthood in a paper like this; we can do little more than touch upon the three salient points indicated above, and

quote for the reader the passages of scripture in which those points are presented.

In Hebrews xiii. 15, we have the third branch of our Lord's service for us, in the heavenly sanctuary. “ *By him* therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.”

What a comfort to know that we have one in the presence of God to present our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving! How sweetly it encourages us to bring such sacrifices at all times! True, they may seem very poor, very meagre, very imperfect; but our great High Priest knows how to separate the precious from the vile; He takes our sacrifices and presents them to God in all the perfect fragrance of His own Person and ministry. Every little breathing of the heart, every utterance, every little act of service goes up to God, not only divested of all our infirmity and imperfection, but adorned with all the excellency of the One who ever liveth in the presence of God, not only to sympathise and intercede, but also to present our sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise.

All this is full of comfort and encouragement. How often have we to mourn over our coldness, barrenness and deadness, both in private and in public. We seem unable to do more than utter a groan or a sigh. Well, Jesus—it is the fruit of His grace—takes that groan or that sigh, and

presents it to God, in all His own preciousness. This is part of His present ministry for us in the presence of our God, a ministry which He delights to discharge, blessed be His name! It is His joy to bear us upon His heart before the throne. He thinks of each one in particular, as if He had but that one to think of.

It is wonderful; but so it is. He enters into all our little trials and sorrows, conflicts and exercises, as though He had nothing else to think of. Each one has the undivided attention and perfect sympathy of that large, loving heart, in all that may arise in our passage through this scene of trial and sorrow. He has gone through it all. He knows, as we say, every step of the road. We can discern His blessed footprints all across the desert; and look up through the opened heavens and see Him on the throne, a glorified Man, but the same Jesus who was down here upon earth—His circumstances changed, but not His tender, loving sympathising heart: "The same yesterday, to-day and for ever."

Such, then, beloved christian reader, is the great High Priest whom we are exhorted to "consider." Truly we have all we want in Him. His sympathy, perfect. His intercession, all prevailing. His presentation of our sacrifice, ever acceptable. Well may we say, "We have all and abound."

And now, in conclusion, let us glance for a

moment, at the precious exhortation in Hebrews x. 24: “ Let us *consider* one another, to provoke unto love and good works.”

How morally lovely is the connection! The more attentively we consider Him, the more we shall be fitted and disposed to consider all who belong to Him, whoever and wherever they may be. Shew us a man full of Christ, and we will shew you a man full of love, and care, and interest for every member of the body of Christ. It must be so. It is simply impossible to be near Christ and not have the heart filled with the sweetest affections for all that belong to Him. We cannot consider Him without being reminded of them, and led out in service, prayer and sympathy, according to our little measure. If you hear a person talking loudly of his love for Christ, his attachment to Him, and delight in Him; and, all the while, having no love for His people, no care for them, no interest in them, no readiness to spend and be spent for them, no self-sacrifice on their behalf—you may be sure it is all hollow worthless profession. “ Hereby perceive we the love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but

in deed and in truth." And again, "This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John iii. 16-18, iv. 21.)

These are wholesome words for all of us. May we apply our hearts most diligently to them! May we, by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost, be enabled to respond, with all our hearts, to these two weighty and needed exhortations to "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession," and to "Consider one another!" And let us bear in mind that the proper consideration of one another will never take the form of prying curiosity, or unwarrantable *espionage*—things which can only be regarded as the curse and bane of all christian society. No; no; it is the very reverse of all this. It is a loving, tender care expressing itself in every form of refined, delicate and seasonable service—the lovely fruit of true communion with the heart of Christ.

C. H. M.

When you have no will and no strength, then you can follow Christ, and then He can trust you.

(J. N. D.)

A WORD ON GALATIANS, ILLUSTRATED
BY THE ORDERS GIVEN TO THE
KOHATHITES.

NUM. IV. 1-20, VII. 1-9; GAL. V. 1-10, VI. 12-14.

IT is impossible to read the epistles carefully, beloved brethren, without seeing that the grace of God, as manifested in the cross of Christ, is presented in them in two very distinct ways. First, we find salvation through the redemption that was there wrought once for all. Secondly, we learn that this same grace characterises the path of the Christian through this world. The apostle says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ [not, 'By which I have been saved or have been brought to God,' but] by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." That is, not merely does his soul rest in the deliverance wrought for him from Satan's power, from sin, from death and judgment, but he finds a separation effected between Him and the world, and so completely, that there is no desire on either side to come together again. And that which has

made the separation is the cross of Christ. So that we may look at the cross of Christ and say: Well, if I am to go into the world, I must give up what God has vouchsafed to me in that cross; I must outrage Him who was nailed there for me, who shewed the depth of His love to me in giving Himself, and in such circumstances of unutterable suffering for the manifestation of divine righteousness in itself and in its effects.

Now there are two sides to this proposition. You might withdraw from the world and say, I stand apart from it; and in so doing might have your heart lifted up with thoughts of your superiority to it in thus standing aside. But the other side of the question presents itself, Would you have the world draw aside from *you*? Are you *crucified* to it? Paul had learnt the value of the *cross*, and accepts the double position.

With the Galatians it was far otherwise. There was on their part an attempt to make a path down here, such as the natural man might walk in; but Paul says, I will not have it nor seek it.

It had not been always so with these saints. They had at first received the truth honestly, and their hearts had burned with affection to Christ and His people. He bears them witness that their love to him, as the minister of it to them, was such that they would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him. There was every sign of the work being a true one in their

souls ; at the beginning he had nothing to say against their course at all. But when he looks at them after some years (there is no actual date given, but evidently some years had gone by), such a change had taken place in them, that, in considering their ways, he stands in doubt of them as to whether there was a real work of God in their souls. He says : I have confidence in the *Lord* about you, but when I look at *you*, I can scarcely recognise you as my children.

Now what made this difference? You do not find in the epistle that there was any moral evil among them. But the fact was they had given place to an evil principle which was undermining and ruining everything. They wanted to arrange spiritual things so as to suit human nature and thus walk by sight, not faith. They were seeking to get up a system of their own in which everything would go on wheels, as people say ; like a machine in working order, you have only to turn the steam on and all is set going at once. That suits the natural man. The Galatians had not got in their souls the sense of the Holy Spirit as a present living power in their hearts, and so they turned to an external machinery based, no doubt, on what in its origin was divine, but, when misapplied, became the means of resisting God's present purpose in grace ; and by it they brought themselves into bondage to their own ordinances.

The apostle goes at once to the root of the matter and shews them that, in so doing, they had really given up the truth that God had sent down the Holy Ghost to dwell in the hearts of those that believe, to guide them into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto them, and to be in them a present living power for walking worthy of Him who had called them to His own kingdom and glory, besides giving them the power to cry Abba, Father, and to know what it is to be "an heir of God through Christ."

I may be forgiven a short digression here for the purpose of making this clearer; for it is of great importance. The admittance that deliverance *has been wrought*, is quite a different thing from the knowledge that *oneself* is individually free. Now in the first seven verses of chapter iv. there are two distinct statements as to the work of the Son and the Spirit. There is, first, the mission of God's Son to redeem those that were under the law. That was Christ's own work quite apart from us. Then we read: "Because ye *are* sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." This is quite another thing; it is the mission of the Holy Ghost, and is accomplished *in us*. The cry "Abba, Father," is much more than the statement that God is Father. It means that the believer has the sense in his soul of the

relationship the words imply, and that he rejoices in it. When I state that such a person *is* my father, there is nothing in the mere statement which implies my attachment to him, or gives a guarantee that I shall not break away from him and never speak to him again. But when a child addresses his father as such, calling him affectionately "my Father," the relationship between the two is evidently being kept up. Now God sends His Spirit into our hearts for this very purpose. Surely it needed a divine Person in us to make such a relationship known so as to be enjoyed.

It is based upon redemption: there we find the door of access into it; but we have to learn in our souls individually what it means for a slave to become a son. Let us take the figure of a negro in slavery. Suppose you wanted to deliver such an one and set him free, how would you go about it? The first step would be, of course, to go to the master and settle with him as to what price he would take. It would be of no use to ask the slave what he considered his price to be; *he* could not settle it. It is evident that the act of purchase is entirely apart from the slave. But now, having paid the price, you have to do with the poor man himself, and then the question is how to make him understand that you intend him to be free.

A first impulse might induce you to let him go. But if so, how is he to live? He has no means-

of providing for himself. He is without friends, without a position, without means in the wide world. You would surely furnish him with means, but what is he to do when the money is spent? The same difficulty recurs. You take him into your house, and let him work for you, and pay him as a hireling for his labour. After a while, let us go and ask him how he likes his new life. We remark to him: You are free now! Free? he answers; what does that mean? I have changed *masters*, it is true: my present master is very kind to me, so that my life is no longer burdensome to me as it was; but still he is my master, and I am his servant: what do you mean by being *free*? As long as the relative position remains the same, one born and bred in slavery cannot possibly understand what freedom is. But bring him into the family, make him as one of the children; will he not then learn, through newly awakened affections, what it is to be in another relationship altogether? They have set me at their own table, he says; they treat me as one of themselves; they talk to me as one interested in the family matters; this is different indeed! I feel I am a slave no longer; he who was my master is now my father; now I know that I am free!

And then, what place is ours at the table? Ask the negro slave again; what place would his slave's heart dare to crave for? Would he not

shrink from being at the same table as the other members of the family? Would he not look on himself and say, I am black, they are white; I cannot sit with them; let them give me a little table by myself, or one in another room? Ah, it is not thus God deals with us. But we must change the simile. The slaves are many, but there is one SON, and He sets us in the place of His own firstborn.

It is "the Spirit of his *Son*" that He has sent into our hearts. He would turn our eyes and thoughts away from our miserable selves, that our gaze may be fixed on the SON and our hearts ravished with His glory; and He sends down the Holy Ghost to say to us in living power, "If a son, then an heir, an heir of God, joint heir with Christ." Everything that belongs to the relationship is ours; for sonship and heirship go together; but the Lord's heart finds contentment in making known the Father. (John xvii. 26.)

Now, while upon this subject, just let me ask you one thing. Which part of the blessing has the greatest attraction for your soul? Is it the inheritance and its glory, or is it the relationship with the Father? Surely not one of us will hesitate to say that the relationship is by far the more precious of the two. But that, dear friends, we have *now*. We are waiting for the inheritance; we have the *hope* of that; it is the "hope" attached to the revelation of God's right-

eousness, as expressed in this epistle, and inseparable from the relationship into which we are brought. But the relationship, the more blessed of the two, is ours to enjoy *now*. The doctrine exposed in the Galatians is the fundamental principle of Christianity: God has sent down His Spirit into our hearts here, and that because we have been made sons through redemption. He sends the Spirit into our hearts, that we may know the relationship, and enter into it, and enjoy it. In Ephesians we see the blessed fruits of its exercise and what flows from it, as well as the activities of these divine affections in the power of the Spirit. In Galatians we find the introduction to it, and the power for its exercise, the Holy Spirit.

Now the Galatians had practically given this truth up; the apostle has therefore to lay the foundation of first principles, insisting upon the relationship into which they had been already brought, and shewing that as to the inheritance which attaches to it, the Holy Spirit is the present earnest. So when speaking of how we are to live down here until we get to the inheritance, he says, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." The Holy Spirit occupies us with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as we go on our way, forming us morally in His image. (2 Cor. iii.)

There is a remarkable point too, if we pay at-

tention to it, in chapter v., which shews the character of this power that works in us. We have in verses 19, 22, the contrast marked between "the *works* of the flesh" and "the *fruit* of the Spirit." Why are the words different? "Works" suppose effort; the natural man understands this; it expresses his life in the world; but there is no effort connected with the thought of "fruit." No amount of trying would ever get fruit from a tree. If it is in a suitable climate and in a good state and watered, it must bring forth fruit.

Consider too "the fruit" mentioned in verse 22. Would you confide your heart to a person who says, I am trying to love you as much as I can? Would you not feel instinctively there was something wrong? Real love is so engrossed with its object, that it is only tried with the feeling of its own insufficiency: there is no effort, no difficulty about it; it is the natural outflow of what exists within, and only seeks a vent in order to shew itself, though never for its own sake. In the same way is it not clear that one who says, I am trying to get joy, or I am trying to get peace, is only painfully manifesting that he has not got it? All these fruits, different and varied as they may be, and admitting of growth and culture, are produced without effort the moment a soul is really subject to the Spirit of God, led of the Spirit and indwelt by Him. But, as with the

healthy tree, there must be, for the development and abundance of fruit, the suited climate and nourishment. The vital power is the Holy Ghost; the meat and drink in Christ (John vi.); the climate is the grace of God (Rom. vi. 14); the ground we are rooted in, His love (Eph. iii. 17; John xv.) We are first "*born* of the Spirit," as the Lord says to Nicodemus, that is, made children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; then we are called to "walk in the Spirit."

I now desire to look at the practical hindrances which came in to turn the Galatians aside from the path of faith in the power of the Spirit. Paul says to them: "Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" This is why I read those passages in Numbers, because we find in them several points which bear upon the subject before us. It is a serious thing to find these young saints who had received the word in its fulness from an apostle, turned away in so short a time from the truth they had been taught. Is not this a solemn warning for us all?

In the book of Numbers which contains the Levitical ordinances, we find God's thoughts as to what He considers His service* in this world. The

* The word rendered "host" in Numbers iv. 3 has various meanings. In verse 23 and elsewhere, it is translated "service" in the text, and in the margin "warfare." It is a word which is constantly translated "war,"

Levites were first as an entire tribe separated to God, and then their three families made three principal classes (or four, if the priesthood be included), each having a different service to perform. Those who, after the priests, were brought into the nearest place were the Kohathites.

Now, without entering much into the details that are given to us, we may notice that the special service of the Kohathites was in connection with the vessels of the tabernacle, with the dwelling-place of God in the midst of His people—those vessels which set forth individually different phases of Christ's glory. When the camp removed (and the journeying was characteristic of the wilderness), their duty was to bear the holy vessels. They could not choose their burden; they were not even allowed to touch the holy vessels; but after the priests had covered them up in the ordered way and put them upon bars or staves, then the Kohathites came forward to receive each one his appointed service and learn what his duty was. They were not to look at the holy things uncovered, on pain of death. This was a particular ordinance as to their special service. (Chap. iv. 17–20.) It was the priests, who went habitually into the tabernacle,

“battle,” “army,” “host.” It means labour or hard duty of warlike character, implying personal suffering. Evidently the better rendering here would have been warfare or service. See Philippians i. 29, 30.

whose duty it was to cover the vessels and prepare them for removal.

None of these vessels might, on any account, be put into waggons, as was all else that pertained to the tabernacle; they were to be carried alone on the shoulders of the Levites. Waggons were offered at the time of the dedication of the altar by the twelve princes of the tribes for the service of Jehovah, and God told Moses to give them to the Gershonites and the Merarites, as useful in transporting the curtains, boards, bars, sockets, and other different parts that fell to their share in the transport; but to the Kohathites He gave none, "because the service of the sanctuary belonging to them was that they should bear upon their shoulders."

As we have seen, all these vessels thus carried were covered up. There was nothing to be seen, nothing to attract attention except the ark with its covering of blue; all else was under the badgers' skins. Upon the ark was first put the veil of the tabernacle; then the badgers' skins, and over that they were to "spread a cloth wholly of blue." This gave to the ark a very marked place. When the Israelites were moving from place to place, the ark in its blue covering was always to be distinguished, standing out in contrast with the white robes of the priests and Levites. But this exception only brought more fully into view the fact, that all the other

vessels of the sanctuary were concealed under the badgers'-skin coverings. No one could tell from the outward appearance what these vessels were, though each Kohathite might know what his appointed charge was. But there was nothing in the service itself, or what was visible of it, to bring glory to those occupied in it. An external looker-on could only have the impression that the Kohathites were set apart for the hardest labour. On no account were they to be allowed the relief of a waggon for bearing their charge. They were always to carry on their shoulders. Is not this attitude full of meaning for us? The Kohathites were subject to what they carried, and their hearts were exercised as to the value of what they bore; each one must keep in his proper place, and bear his appointed, outwardly unattractive burden. But if any asked them what they did, their answer would be, that they carried the vessels of the sanctuary. And, better than all, they could have the sense in their souls that the eye of Israel's God was upon them: they were set apart for the service of His house.

Now have we anything in our hearts of the spirit of the Kohathites? God has called us near to Himself, that we may bear His truth in testimony to Him through this world. Are we bearing it as the Kohathites were called to do? It was no question of choice with them: their

service was one of simple obedience, yet very near to God, and, if their heart was in it, one of singular delight. And observe too, they must needs walk *together*. No vessel of the sanctuary could be carried without a bar, which supposes at the very least two bearers. Every personal consideration must with them be set aside. One might be stronger than another, or able to walk faster; but neither the strong nor the weak could decide the pace or the time; that depended alone on the cloud which directed every movement of the camp. And none were in more direct dependence on it than the Kohathites. But so walking in their divine order, might they not count on help from Him who manifested His glory on the ark they bore? So it was, on [a most memorable day of joy in Israel, which we will speak of presently. Their service obliged them to look up to God, both for guidance and help: it was characterised in every detail by obedience and dependence upon Him.

Does not all this transport us at once into the epistle to the Philippians, where we find the aged apostle suffering with joy in prison, despised and forgotten in the world, cheering and exhorting the saints to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, to be heavenly minded, "walking by the same rule," forgetting what was behind and reaching forth to what was before? Could he not present

himself to them as an example, having laboured in the gospel in the very spirit of the Kohathites? "Necessity is laid upon me," he says; so he would have his service without charge; its reward was in itself, in its being for Christ's sake. So we can understand how deeply he felt the conduct of the Galatians.

Alas, God's order is easily forgotten by us. As it was with the Galatian saints, so had it been before in Israel: human nature is the same. God has written His judgment of it for our learning and instruction. Let us go over briefly the facts of the history in 2 Samuel vi. It was a wonderful moment for the king after God's own heart, when he thought of bringing the ark to Zion. Up to that time there had been a moral blot on God's chosen people: a fortress in the land from which no power of Israel could dislodge the enemy. Joshua, the Judges, and even king Saul, who in his zeal for Israel sought to destroy the Gibeonites, had left it untouched. There the enemy was insolent, more so than anywhere else. The place was impregnable in their eyes: "the blind and the lame" could keep out the hosts of Jehovah. It was a standing reproach on them, and consequently on Jehovah's name. But as soon as David receives the crown of the kingdom over Israel, and the whole land is at his feet, he feels his responsibility is now to put all at God's feet; so the first thing he does is to go to the fortress

of Zion and wrest it out of the hands of the Jebusites. God owned this act of faith, and chose the place from that time "to place his name there." That which had been the stronghold of the enemy is to be henceforth the brightest spot of all. But the glory of the victory is not complete until Psalm cxxxii. can be sung there, and David can say in the words of Moses: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength." This leads to fresh exercises of heart, and to fresh lessons of human weakness. Yet David is a Kohathite in heart, and shews, as is clear from the end of chapter v., that dependence on God was his habit; and he finds in practice that God is for him.

But now comes a very different scene. David had been faithful in fighting the enemy: he has to be tested as to faithfulness in God's house. Then is manifested of how real danger to the soul is the moment after a victory has been gained. The ark has to be carried up to Mount Zion; but David does not think of the Kohathites. His mind is full of the victories God has given him, and he gathers together 30,000 chosen men of Israel, and consults with every leader about bringing up the ark. (1 Chron. xiv.) He only finds the world's wisdom with them, but does not detect it: and they imitate the Philistines with their cart and oxen. But the oxen stumble, Uzzah puts forth his hand to steady the ark and

is smitten, and David, displeased, carries it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

Why was it that God allowed the oxen to stumble? How is it that David has to give up his enterprise with shame, whereas when the Philistines did the very same thing all went right, and God was glorified? It was as David himself owned soon after, because "we sought him not *after the due order.*"

The Kohathites were not in their right place. God allowed this to be worked out to its full result, in order that David's heart might be fully tested and brought into the light of His presence. David's thought of bringing up the ark was very beautiful, but he forgot "the due order." Like the Galatians in an after day, he replaced the service of the sanctuary by the Philistine cart and oxen, and did not do it even so well as they: and so it generally happens when God's saints imitate the world. It seemed so simple and natural; but because it was so, it was manifestly of the world. It was not God's way.

David however learned the lesson; and when afterwards he set the Kohathites in their proper place, God "helped them" as they bore the ark of the covenant, and the joy in Israel was legitimate and blessed. At every stage of the Levites' onward progress, they offered a bullock and a ram.

But to return to Numbers iv. There was a special injunction as to the Kohathites that we

do not find in the case of the other Levites. The Lord said: "Cut ye not off the tribe of the families of the Kohathites from among the Levites: but thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: but they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die." There was danger for them that did not exist in the same way for others; for they were in the place of greatest nearness to God. God will not suffer in His presence that which is not worthy of Himself. He does not interfere with the world in its sin. He lets that go on its way until the judgment. But He will be sanctified in those that draw near to Him, and for them especially exists the danger of being cut off if unsubject to the order of the sanctuary. This was what did happen on the day of the consecration of Aaron. The nearer we are to God, the more careful we must be to do everything according to God's order. Only after the holy things were covered were they to come and take them. They were separated by God to this special service, but they were not allowed to exceed it or look upon the holy things.

What instruction is there for us in this? Is it not, not allowing the natural man, the curiosity of an unsanctified heart, to satisfy itself with that which

God has put in His house to set forth the glory of Christ? The natural man must not be allowed to trespass here, even to admire. God has given us His truth in order that the truth may command us, may rule our hearts and form our ways; it is not for the natural man to admire or to criticise it. And those who were in the greatest danger of doing this were those who were brought the nearest. God will have the conscience exercised as to His presence, as to what it is to have to do with Him. The sense of this in the soul is like the ballast in a vessel. The unladen ship must have ballast. All may go well if the wind happens to be gentle and favourable, but without ballast, if a storm rises, the ship must be lost. God, having brought us in Christ into a position of the greatest nearness and privilege, and having given us a nature capable of enjoying Him, will not have our natural minds working about His truth, or enjoying it as a natural man might enjoy it. Want of care as to this gets us out of the current of God's thoughts, and leads into the state of the Galatians, who having begun in the Spirit, went on to make a fair show in the flesh. We may enjoy God's truth in a fleshly way; but then God comes in in judgment.

May our hearts be so exercised before Him that we may become apt to learn more of His thoughts about service and testimony in communion with His own dear Son.

That which is nearest to the Lord's heart is the church for which He gave Himself. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it." Have I got anything in my heart that answers to the Lord's as to this? God has brought us into communion with His own firstborn Son, and will have our hearts set upon Christ's interests, our thoughts occupied with Him, that we may be able to understand *with all saints* what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God." United by the Holy Ghost to all saints in Christ, you cannot isolate yourself from them without practically giving up the testimony and service He has appointed, and ignoring holiness as God has set it forth in Christianity. The Kohathites must work together.

Of course we do not find the church as the body of Christ in the Old Testament, but we do find there the "order" of the house of God, and in those who are brought so near to God as the Kohathites were, we have a distinct indication of what He seeks in those whom He has now made nigh in His Son.

First, they are under the power of the truth; they bear it on their shoulders, valuing it, and caring for it as that which is most precious. Secondly, they walk together; and what keeps them together too is the position of service in

which they are set in dependence upon God. Thirdly, they do not seek to satisfy the craving of the natural heart with God's holy things; they walk as to them in God's presence in the Spirit, so as not to satisfy the lust of the flesh. These are the three characteristics of the Kohathites..

What a comfort and joy it is to the heart to know that God has brought His people so near to Himself that He may bless them there according to His own thoughts ! Surely He desires for us that we may be practically under the power of the place in which He has set us "IN CHRIST." The tendency of human nature is always to measure things by the amount of outward blessing or success. It characterises very much so-called christian work in the day we live in. But if I am really on God's ground, I shall be content with knowing that His eye is ever on His saints, and that He thinks of the appointed place and measure and sphere of service that He has allotted to each of His own. In this He is sovereign ; but if living in the sanctuary and furnished with His thoughts, we shall get intelligent in discerning His ways, and find ever fresh occasions of joy in tracing them out. Personally we have to ask ourselves, Am I in the place where He wishes me to be ? Am I occupied with the service of His Son in the path of obedience, and in constant dependence upon Him, allowing no principle of the

flesh or of the world to come in between me and Him so as to hinder my adopting His divine "order"? All the rest must be left in His hand.

The Lord has put His name upon us, and calls us to do whatever we have to do for His sake. "I know thy works." Weakness is no real hindrance, for if felt as it ought to be, it only draws us nearer to Him, and becomes the opportunity for His grace to shine forth, and His strength to be made perfect in it. To such He says, "I have set before thee an open door which no man can shut." God will have us hold the truth in communion with Himself (otherwise it has no power over the soul), in order that we may be found going quietly forward as His witnesses, "led of the Spirit," and with the constant sense of being in His presence under the power of the truth He has revealed to us.

We shall find that it is the cross of Christ which furnishes the secret of power for testimony: "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body." May it be more and more so with us, through the infinite grace of God.

[W. J. L.]

LIBERATION.

JOSHUA III.

THE first great question is, What is Jordan? What does it represent? What is the antitype?

One very important thing in connection with it is, that if you do not know the antitype you never understand the type; nothing has been a more fruitful source of mischief than trying to explain the type without knowing the antitype. Thus those who do not understand Paul's teaching can never interpret the Old Testament. The apostle puts his own teaching in 2 Timothy iii. alongside Old Testament scriptures.

Well, now, as to the Jordan people say, "Jordan is a type of our natural death." If so, what, I ask, is Gilgal? Why, it must be purgatory, for Gilgal comes after Jordan! You see at once the inconsistency of the interpretation. If you understand Paul's doctrine, you will see that Ephesians is the antitype of Joshua. I may add that an important principle in connection with this subject is, in practice never to be below the type.

Now let us turn to the chapter before us, and see what the type is.

It is a type of the truth that we are dead with Christ. It is not the Red Sea. You do not know the Red Sea and the Jordan at the same time; antitypically they occurred at the same moment, for Christ died but once; and these are two aspects of His death. In the Red Sea He meets all the enemies: that is the aspect of His death towards God. At the Jordan it is its aspect towards me.

Now what do we learn at the Red Sea? It is a very important history, but I do not dwell on it now. I will only say that the Red Sea is where Christ in His death removed every atom of the offensive thing from before the eye of God; there every power was overcome; it is not merely the blood screening from judgment. In Exodus xii. the people have the sense of being sheltered from judgment by the blood; but at the Red Sea the whole thing is judicially removed from the eye of God for ever. The old man has been crucified at the cross, that the body of sin might be destroyed; hence the Egyptians seen to-day are to be seen no more for ever. It is not Egypt. Egypt is the *place* where the judgment was. The Egyptian is the *person* on whom the judgment came. That is in figure the old man; *that* brought judgment on the place, and that is gone completely; as we get in one of the Psalms: "There was not one of them left." That is what God has done for the people, and they are brought to God.

Romans iii. answers to Exodus xii. ; Romans v. gives more the idea of Exodus xv. ; everything is clear. Christ is risen from the dead ; not a single disturbing thing is left ; all of it is gone from the eye of God, and therefore there is peace. There was never peace till Christ rose from the dead. People think it very dreadful to say so, but how could there be peace until the battle were over? I do not say there was not victory ; victory is when you have overcome the enemy, but peace is when you have silenced him. All our enemies are sunk like lead in the mighty waters. "He entered into death that he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil." If you do not understand the Red Sea, it is no use going on to the Jordan.

Jordan is another aspect of the death of Christ, it is our death with Christ, while the Red Sea is His death for us. The thing I learn in Jordan is, that I am carried over through Christ's death to the place where Christ is, by the Spirit of God. If I were dead I should be happy, I should go to heaven ; but the question is, Can I get over *before* I die? That is the entire question, and it is the important thing that belongs to us, and not to the millennial saints. God does not deal *now* with the man that has rejected His Son, but He changes the rebel into a member of the body of Christ ; while in the millennium the rebel will be turned into a subject, because

the King will be here. The King is not here now. What then does God do? Through divine grace He changes him into a member of the body of Christ.

There will be no Jordan in the millennium, and it will not be necessary to get across then, because Christ will be here. The great thing *now* is to get across to the place where Christ is now. Would you like to go? Well you *are* across, though you have not found it out. Christ would not have it otherwise than that we should be with Him where He is. It would not be enough for Him, that we should only be clear in the sight of God, and rejoicing in the victory. No, He would have us in the place where He is. But you could not get into the place unless death had come in.

Death *has* come in; in Jordan we die *with* Him; it is not there *He for* us. Thank God, He *has* died for us, and done the work perfectly to the satisfaction of the heart of God for ever. He has never any question about me, never. He never sees me in the flesh again. Alas, I may go back to it! But, as one has said, "Woe betide me if I do," because God must judge the root of it in me, and that is the trouble a believer has now—not to be forgiven merely what he has done, but that the root may be judged. Peter was forgiven for a long time before the root was judged; and that is restoration. "Then will I

sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean." Not forgiven only, but cleansed. The root must be judged. But, you say, it may spring again. Yes, but the least likely bit to grow is the one you dread.

There is another thing in Exodus iii. 8: God says, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." That was the purpose of God concerning His people, and that Christ has accomplished. Have you a doubt about it? It is accomplished. He has done it perfectly. Some one may say, I never knew it. And why? Because you never cared for it. But do you think God does not care whether you have it or not? It is the deep delight of His heart that you should enjoy it. Caleb could say, If the Lord *delights* in us He will bring us in.

Did you ever consider in the case of the prodigal son, who it is delights to bring him in? Why, it is the Father. It is the delight of the Father, then the delight of the prodigal. It is He who says, "Bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and be merry;" let him share the joys of my house. The fact is, beloved friends, and it is a wonderful thing to say it, God never had one to share the joys of His house until the prodigal came; not one. Not *one could* He have till Christ came. The thief on the cross was

the first sample brought up to share divine joys in company with the Son of God. Who can deny it? But, you say, were there not many saved before? Yes, but never brought into the place in company with Christ, because Christ was not there. Think of the delight with which He said: "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

I desire to call your attention to the fact that God never had a people to share His joys till now. Hence He says to the servants, "Bring hither the fatted calf." The fatted calf was the thing reserved, and reserved until the guest came. Who was the guest? The poor sinner brought in by the Son: that is the guest. The lost sheep brought in on the Shepherd's shoulders, and by the power of the Spirit working in that same prodigal. The Shepherd had given His life for him, the Holy Spirit had accomplished a divine work in his soul, and the Father was waiting to receive him with unspeakable delight. "It is meet," He said, "that we should make merry and be glad."

That is what answers to the passage I have read in Exodus. God would bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey. But Moses never did; it was Joshua who brought them in. What is the antitype? First the gospel is, that the joys of heaven are made known to me, a sinner here upon the earth, by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. "The kingdom of heaven is not meat

and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The gospel is, I am delivered from Egypt, and I have the Spirit sent down from a glorified Saviour to light up my heart with the joys of heaven, the joys of the Father's house, until I come home. Thus the Spirit comforts me until I come home. That is the gospel. Now I come to the church.

Well, not only is God's Son up in heaven, but God has brought up His own to enjoy heaven *now*. We are not there fully yet; but the point is, we can come to the spot now where Christ is; that is, in spirit. As we sometimes sing :

" In spirit there already."

or, as we sang just now :

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

Have you got the right of entrance there, and have you ever been there ? That is the question.

I ask then first, What is your title ? We have a right to be there because Christ has cleared away the whole thing that hindered. You may say, I see that, but I have never enjoyed being there. That is true perhaps, and I go with you in that and say, would that I enjoyed it more ; still, the fault is not with God ; it is our own. A person may not enjoy it, but there it is for him. Whether

he does enjoy it, is practically to be known by the way he is at his work. I say to a working man, Would you like to go home? Oh yes, he says, that is what I long for. I never see a man well-ordered who has no home. A Christian is not right if he has not a home. Where is his home? Up there above. "In spirit there already."

You get the idea in Psalm xxiii. : "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters." It is refreshment, and therefore it is said, "He restoreth my soul." He invigorates it. It is not "Whene'er I go astray;" that is not the right thought. This restoration is to help you on, to invigorate you. Like a man going to rest at night at home in very happy circumstances, and in the morning he goes forth cheerfully to his work; or like a person going out warm on a cold day—that is exactly the idea. It is the delight of God to have us there, and the Spirit come down leads us there.

It must surely greatly interest me to see the delight the Father has that the prodigal tastes the joys of His house. That is the gospel—a wonderful thing. But when I come to the church, and know that Christ, cast out of this earth, has been raised up to heaven, and seated on the right hand of God, I understand how the purpose God had before Him, has been brought about: that His people should now through the Spirit, and death

with Christ, travel there and enjoy the very spot where He is. This is greater still.

Have you ever *been* to this place? Would you *like* to go there? *Will* you go there? That is the question raised, and that I want you to answer. "Wilt thou go with this man?" What! leave all my associations here, kindred and every tie, to go with Him? Yes! Rebekah has heard such an account concerning Isaac that she will go to him where he is.

You could never be satisfied with or enjoy the mere relation of the facts. How could you? Suppose I tell a boy at school, who has never had a home, to go to such-and-such a place and he would find it his home. He might say, I was never there. The fact is he has no idea of a home, and has no power to fix his heart upon it. He has neither father nor mother; he is an orphan. It is not that he can be so happy at school as at home, but he has no tie to a parent, or he would be glad to go home; it could not be otherwise. It matters not how happy the school may be, or the things here. The question I put to my heart is, "Wilt thou go with this man?" If you had found out the preciousness that is in Christ, would you not long to go to the place where He is?

I know what some say, Can we not have Him with us here? That is like Orpah: she kissed her mother-in-law, but she would not go with her.

She could not leave her country, she did not love enough; Naomi was not indispensable to her. If the Lord were indispensable to me, this Joshua iii. would be the delight of my heart. You say, would you go and leave everybody and everything? Yes! But do not say, beloved friends, "leave everybody;" because, mark the practical effect, you would come back to them a better man if you had crossed over. If you went over there, and entered into what belongs to you there, you would come back a better man. In Colossians a man is told not to be bitter to his wife; but in Ephesians, where he comes from heaven, he is told to "love his wife as *Christ loved the church.*" You see how great that is. It is an advantage to all, because he comes back to resume his ties, and fulfil his obligations, in a better way.

Well, there are three reasons for our crossing over: first, the delight the Father has in having us there, and the delight of Christ in having us there, and, secondly, our delight in being with Him; and a third is, it is what suits us, because we have a heavenly nature. No place else suits us, because we are like exotics. We have got into the sunlight, and it suits us. I say, I can enjoy myself now! I come home from business cares, from being always on the alert, all the day long, and now I relax myself, I am at ease; around me all suits me.

But there is another thing I have already

alluded to, and it is this: If you do not go over, and do not become acquainted with Christ's circumstances there, you never can demonstrate Him down here. I can understand a person saying, I do not know how to do this. You may be a very good wilderness man, but not a heavenly one. He is not a thorough Frenchman who has never been to France. You may be a redeemed man running on to heaven, but that is not being *in* heaven. An Ephesian is one coming *from* heaven. He is not only raised up, but he *knows* he is raised up, to the spot where Christ is; he has by faith crossed over to heaven, and now comes back from it; and yet still is in the place where Christ is in spirit, though not yet in body. But He will "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Then in body too, we shall be with Him for ever.

Let me dwell a little on the subject, to explain what I mean. If I die, I shall go to heaven; I may have a happy death-bed; but I call that *dissolution*. Now I am going to use a new word, which I trust will make it plain. I call Jordan *liberation*. I call actual death *dissolution*.

I trust I have stated to you plainly that God has accomplished it all; and if I am not enjoying it, it is because I do not care about it; and in practice, God does not "cast his pearls be-

fore swine." There is nothing more pernicious practically with ourselves than exhibiting more affection than is valued. If you value it, His word to you is, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." It is not that it is not there for all alike, but you do not enjoy it because you do not value it. If you valued it, you would be in it, for "To him that hath, shall more be given." It is blessed truth I am telling you; but of what use is it telling it to you, if you do not care for it, do not value it?

Now, I will explain. You know what a happy death-bed is. I have seen a person so really filled with the sense of the blessedness of being with Christ in heaven, that there was actual delight at the thought of being released. That is dissolution. The last tie and the greatest is broken. The greatest tie is the one you cling to most; it is the hardest thing to get rid of. There is a saying, that if you had twenty-one links to this earth, and twenty of them were broken, you would stick to the last harder than all the twenty. Dissolution is, the links are all worn out, and a man gets a brighter sense of what it is to go.

I visited a poor woman on her death-bed who had a large family. I said something to her about them, but she replied, "I could not turn my attention to them now. I could not be disturbed now from the delight I have in the prospect of

soon being with the Lord." She was ready for dissolution.

I believe there are hundreds who are really over Jordan in spirit, who have never accepted Jordan—never accepted liberation. They have learned they have a Saviour in the glory, and know the perfect satisfaction they have in that scene of light, because of their Saviour there, but they have not accepted Jordan; that is, their tie to the earth is not cut. You say, what should I do if every tie here was cut? Well, that is the proof that you have not liberation; and if you say your natural death only can do it for you, you are making liberation less than dissolution. In a spiritual death-bed you are still in the body; in a natural one you leave it; and yet I say the former is the greatest. Paul says, "to God I am beside myself," lost altogether. That is what Jordan is; that is what liberation is. It is not merely I ought to be, but I *am* loosened to everything by the commanding attraction of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the delight of heart I have to go to the place where He is. The known welcome that awaits me in that scene enables me to say, I *must* stand loose to all here. That is not when we come to a death-bed, but when in the prime of life, and surrounded with everything here that the scene can afford to make one happy in it; when I have found out that I can cross over, that I am over, I know that it is better to be there.

How? Turn to the antitype: just read one verse shewing this in Ephesians i. "That ye may know... what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." That is the power that has taken me up with Christ: the same power that has brought Christ up has brought me up. Is that a known thing? If you have not known it, you cannot enjoy it. You may say as in Peter, I am in the pathway. Yes, following His steps, and you may be suffering for righteousness' sake, and watching against the power of the enemy and the like. And that is all very blessed, but that is the wilderness, and this is a different thing altogether. I am not dwelling on that side now; I am trying to set the other before you, and to lead you to delight in it, and to see the delight the Lord has in having you where He is.

Turn now to Luke ii. 29. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." That is dissolution, not liberation: Simeon is going to die. I hold liberation is, that I am cleared by Christ's death from every tie to this world, and I have gone up to the spot where He is, and come back again to resume every tie in a new power. If I did not get over I could not do it. What power do I

come back with ? A heavenly power. Do you think that is an extraordinary thing ? But if you know the Father's heart, and Christ's heart, you cannot for a moment doubt the reality of it. Christ is raised up by the mighty power of God. Now, the members of His body are brought up by that same power. All are raised up. *All.*

You may say, I never enjoyed it. Perhaps not, but it does not make it the less true. A child when he is born has five senses : it is a long time before he knows he has them, but it is none the less true. A child may be born a prince, but he does not know it; and this is like many Christians. But what is the worst part is that they do not care to know it. When the apostle is writing to the Ephesians, he lets his heart flow out, for they were in a fit state to receive what he had to impart. Hence he says, "When I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you." I want the "eyes of your hearts to be enlightened." I want you to know these things, for you are in a condition for it.

Simeon's case is a happy death-bed : but it is not liberation. There is a perfect sense that all is cleared, but he wants to go away, and not to come back again. Liberation is : I am going clean away, but though I go away thus, I shall come back again a new kind of person, in

a new power; a new person influenced by the place where I have been.

Look now at Stephen. "But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." I say, beloved friends, that is liberation. He had not a single regret; he gladly gave up everything—everything for Christ. He went to the other side before he died; he was perfectly over. Christ had gone in and cleared the way for him. If the way had not been cleared, he could not have gone over. It was a new thing which was never opened out before. Heaven opened to a believer for the first time. Now Stephen is brought into liberation. And this is true for us all. How? By the Spirit of God, who abides in me down here. I do not say we have all visions like that, but we have the *thing*. This is the opening of the new line, if I may so speak, and all must go by it some day: but what I want you to know, and what I am seeking to get definitely before you, is that we may go over now. Do you enter into the delight the Father has that you should enjoy the place where Christ is? As a believer in the work of His Son, He sends down the joys of heaven by the Holy Ghost to you here; that is the fatted calf; and now in spirit He will have you come up to the place where the joys are. Therefore in the prayer in Ephesians iii., the

apostle says, "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." That is the answer to Deuteronomy xxvi. "And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey."

Thank God, I can go over now. It is my right, and it suits me to go, and I have preponderating reasons besides this. I know it is the delight of the Father's heart to have me there. I have the sense that I am in the very scene now where my Lord is, and there to get properly qualified for His service. What is my duty now? The bride's duty: to set forth that blessed One on the earth where He is not. How do I get qualified? By having to do with Christ's things where He is. That is the difference between heaven and the wilderness. In the wilderness Christ supports me in *my* circumstances: in heaven I am in His circumstances.

I am in the wilderness always in one sense; but I have to stand for Christ here; and I stand here in the power of the Lord.

In Psalm xxii., I see that there is nothing against me, that Christ has not met, and overcome for me. In consequence of this, Stephen

can stand superior to everything here. The holiness of God has been maintained by the work of Christ, and now, if I take the order in this psalm, I see how he meets all the power of evil. First, there is the reproach of the people. Stephen is superior to it. In the power of Christ, the power that put him up there, he is superior to the power against Christ here. He is a heavenly man, he is above his circumstances and standing for Christ; and as to the reproach of the people he is superior to it. What about the bulls of Bashan—ecclesiastical power? Superior. What about bodily weakness—being brought into the dust of death? Superior. What about the lion—Satan? Superior. What about the horns of the unicorn—death? Superior, superior to them all! As to his murderers, so superior that he could kneel down and pray for them. He was there to set forth a rejected Christ upon the earth in His own power. He is *over* Jordan; he had liberation *before* dissolution.

Let us turn to another example in Philippians i. "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." Paul longs for dissolution, but still he is quite ready to stay; but he says, "To be with Christ is far better." You say, perhaps, he was never there. Yes, he

was in paradise as "a man in Christ." How did he get there? By his own death? No, Christ's death had relieved him of all the encumbrances connected with the flesh; "Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell." He was set so free that he could rise up in the Spirit to the very spot where Christ is. He would like to remain there, but it was needful for the Philippians he should remain here, and he says, "I know I shall remain."

Now turn back to Joshua for a moment. You understand now, beloved friends, what I feel in speaking on a chapter like this. I say that we all ought to be delighted, we all ought to be ready to leave everything here to go over there. What, if you get happy in the Lord? Yes, when you are happy in the Lord, what comes into your mind? I do not think when you are thoroughly happy in the Lord that either the greatest mercy or the greatest sorrow comes into your mind. That is what comforts many a one who is really over in spirit, but who has not accepted Jordan.

I want you to accept Jordan. That is liberation. I am over through Christ's death. Through my own death I shall get to heaven when I die. But the question is, Can I get the power to reach there now? I say you ought to be glad to hear that you *can*. Like as to a school-boy I say, Would you not like to go home?

His parents might be constantly sending him favours at the school, but do you think all these would satisfy him? No, he says, I would rather go home. That is the very spirit I want you and all to have. I thank God I can go home because of Christ's death; I am not waiting for my own death. I can go over yonder and get qualified now; otherwise it is no use trying to act for Christ here. I say if you have not been over you have not the real thing, you do not know how to go on in testimony for Christ. Not all the books in the world will teach children how to behave; it is the way they are brought up at home; it is the associations they are in. And so with you. It is by beholding the glory of the Lord, you are changed into the same image.

"Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you," says Joshua. That is exactly what Stephen finds. The power that put him up there, that power enables him to stand superior to the whole force of the enemy here. He stood unswervingly against all his foes. And that not merely as a stone wall, but with divine feeling; kneeling down, he prayed for the men who were battering him to death.

What is it to have the power of Christ? Where do I get it? By going up there. In Ephesians i. the power comes to put you up there; and then, after shewing you that place (and in Ephesians let me add, it is not so much

the joy of it as the benefits of it), you come down in the third chapter with the power that is now in you. There you get power, never-failing power; but this power is little entered into. Where do the gifts come from? From that same place, and oh, what a place it is!

One thing more. You will find in dissolution as well as in liberation that there is not a drop of water. The waters rose up very far from the city Adam; there was not a drop to be seen; all was clear.

Now the feeling I have myself is this. If I knew liberation better, I should meet death better. I have no doubt many a soul finds when the question of dissolution comes, the moment of death, he knows he is not over. But I say I am by grace over. I am in liberation; I go over to be qualified, and I come back here a new kind of person. I do not think there is a single practical thing in the Epistle to the Ephesians you can do if you are not a heavenly man. You have not the requisite power else. How else could a man love his wife "as Christ loved the church"? You might be an extremely amiable, a devoted and affectionate man, but it is another thing to love as Christ loved the church. You have not the power for it, hence your best love is unlike Christ's love to the church. How could these words be addressed to any man, except one who came with Christ's power? Every other practi-

cal thing is just the same. We are to love one another "as Christ loved us and gave himself for us." If I turn to Romans I find a different thing altogether. There, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." But in Ephesians it touches everything; wives, children, servants, and all. Not a word about children in Romans, Peter, or Hebrews. Not a word about these for a wilderness man. Only in Colossians and Ephesians do you get the children mentioned. And why? Because here you have come up to God, and you can take in the whole scope of His grace. In Romans you are a delivered sinner on the earth, and your family is not touched on. In Peter the wives are mentioned but not the children.

Oh, the immense blessedness of having this power, when we come to the practical side of our lives as Christians here! For this I need to keep my heart more fixed upon the place where Christ is. Nothing will draw my heart there like dwelling on the delight the Father has that I should be there, and the delight of the One who has brought me there. There I learn the blessedness and the freshness of His love, and there I become qualified to stand for Him in the place where He is not.

(J. B. S.)

QUALIFICATION.

JOSHUA v. 10-12

GILGAL follows immediately the crossing of Jordan, the antitype of which is in Ephesians i. By the power of God we were brought over when Christ rose from the dead. Then we all went up with Him. We do not know it perhaps. Born princes, as I have said, are sometimes a long time before they find out what they are. So we are sometimes a long time before we find out that in God's mind we were over when Christ rose.

After Jordan comes Gilgal. First I will notice the difference between Gilgal and Marah. Marah is in Exodus xv. 23. Marah is when you enter the wilderness; Gilgal when you enter Canaan, which is typically the heavenly places. One is in the wilderness and the other in heaven. All turns upon this. Marah is drinking death, the bitter water of the Red Sea. Christ has gone through death for us, and cleared us of everything; we take our place in the wilderness, and now comes suffering in the flesh, clearly not suffering for sin, for Christ has cleared all that away. It is important to understand

the difference between Marah and Gilgal. Every Christian knows something of Marah. He could not be a Christian without it.

In 1 Peter iv. we read : " As Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." That is Marah. The cross is the tree thrown into the waters, and they are sweet because the cross is there. This is the antitype of the passage in Exodus : " Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." For instance, I go into a room, and see something is on the table that I would like to appropriate, but it is not mine, and I do not. I walk out of the room instead. Well, I have ceased from sin. It would be sin to like it, and I did not take it. I suffered in the flesh ; I ceased from sin. It was not that there was no sin in me, but I have ceased from it : I have drunk the bitter water made sweet through Christ's death.

Let me however say this : the wilderness to me is a very different thing from what it was to Israel. To them there was nothing in it to allure them. They could only have tempting things before them by thinking of Egypt. But there are plenty of things around me to tempt me, because I am in the same place, and perhaps doing the same business as before I was converted. Egypt to me yesterday is the wilderness to-day. Yesterday I

had the world with its order and rule to depend upon ; to-day I have nothing to depend upon for a single moment but God.

I will illustrate the difference. There is a man selling apples at the corner of the street, and some ruffianly man comes and overturns his stall. What does he do ? He calls a policeman. That is Egypt. But now he is converted, and he is no longer in Egypt, but in the wilderness, and selling his apples at the corner of the street as before ; and the same wicked man comes and knocks down his stall again. Well, what does he do *now* ? Does he call the policeman ? No, he commits it to his Father ; he says, I must bring in death upon the flesh now instead of gratifying it.

Now this is very different from Israel. In Egypt they could have the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but not in the wilderness ; while I have them all around me. Therefore Peter says, " Abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul." And it is important to understand this difference. You are perhaps a person of unblemished character, but that does not give you immunity from suffering ; you do suffer, but it is from the open attacks of Satan, not the covert ones ; that is, you suffer from Amalek, the enemy of the wilderness. Amalek came out and fought against Israel in the wilderness. He is not the enemy of Canaan.

Romans does not take you out of the wilder-

ness. There we read, "we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body."

In Hebrews we are running on to heaven, but not there yet, nor do we get to the ground where we can stand for Christ. It is not that you are not on ground where you can be a real Christian, conduct yourself rightly, and resist evil, but then it is another thing altogether when we come to Canaan. So in the history of Israel. There was Pharaoh the enemy in Egypt, Amalek in the wilderness, Balaam when they left the wilderness. It was after the wars with Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan, that Balaam appeared. Balaam's object was to draw them into association with the world. Then comes Jordan, and now I am a dead man: man is gone, and I am on the other side. Balaam could not do me any harm in the land; I am dead there through Christ.

We have come now to another ground, and the only ground where we stand for Christ. If you ask, What is the difference between the wilderness and Canaan? I reply, In the wilderness Christ supports me in my circumstances, but in Canaan I stand in His circumstances. Nothing can be clearer. We cannot now know Christ on earth. As the apostle says: "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." Now we are in heaven, and our first lesson is that we are united to Him there, and like a faith-

ful spouse, bound to represent that blessed One to whom we are united; in the place where He is not. That is the thing we are called to, and every true heart says, That is the very thing I would like.

The result is that though I am in the circumstances of the wilderness, I am above them. I will illustrate this simply. Here is a poor woman with many children, struggling on, and the Lord helping her, and she thanking the Lord every day for His mercies to her, and for His care; her heart bounding with delight in the prospect of the eternal rest that is coming; and while thus travelling on through the wilderness, one of her benefactors comes in one day, and proposes something of a worldly nature to her, something of a worldly advantage. But she replies, No, I cannot accept that. She is thus above her circumstances, she is standing for Christ now. But what is the result? That benefactor has become opposed—perhaps bitterly opposed to her. But she is unmoved. She says, I will stand for my Lord. I am getting through the wilderness because He stands for me, but now I stand for Him. Through Him I am across death, and on the other side, risen with Him.

Now I turn to Colossians .iii. to explain Gilgal. The Colossians were intelligent and nice Christians. This is clear from what the apostle says, "We give thanks to God . . . since we heard

of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love ye have to all the saints." In chapter iii. he says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ sitteth."

I do not think we have, properly speaking, the old corn of the land here; there may be allusion to it lower down in the chapter, in "the peace of Christ to which we are called in one body." That is the corporate thing; but here it is individual. I am risen with Christ; but in Ephesians I am not only over Jordan, but I learn what will fit me for Christ here. I do not get that in Colossians at all. It is what we get in Ephesians. There the almighty power of God carries me over; there is not a word about me; not even my conversion. It does not touch my side at all, except as to my state, dead in sins; it is God's side. Well, now comes, "If ye then be *risen with Christ* Set your affections on things above."

There are only two places for blessing, earth and heaven. Often a person may not be worldly, but he is earthly; then he is not heavenly. "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead." You do not get that in Romans. There it is, "*Reckon yourselves dead.*" Here man is gone altogether; this man is the practical difficulty in the way of acting for Christ; you must not bring in this man at all.

“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal”—that is, not merely evil, but fleshly.

Now we come to Gilgal, and I will now try to explain what it is. “Ye *are* dead,” says the apostle; *then* “mortify your members which are upon the earth.” It is not merely bringing death upon a thing as it arises, but now the whole thing is rolled off; the reproach of Egypt is rolled away; that is Gilgal. It is not only that you are dead, but you roll off the reproach of Egypt. I not only put off the bad things, but I put off the flesh, the whole thing. I have entirely done with that man. It is a most wonderful thing to you, if you really know it practically.

See what a practical difference there is between Marah and Gilgal. In Marah you do not allow the working of the flesh; and you must continue that in all your christian course, not allowing the flesh to work. But in Gilgal it is more; the whole thing is rolled off. Put off all these—“anger, wrath, malice,” &c. A person carefully educated perhaps would not have these, but he has others. Well, all must be put off, and this on the ground that you are dead with Christ. I am not to have one bit of what belonged to the old man. I am disencumbered of the whole thing now, and I am occupying new ground.

You may say it is very difficult to understand

it. In one sense it *is* difficult, and you never can understand it in a natural way. Our meetings are often spoiled by trying to bring out natural sentiment; nothing of human sentiment can help a Christian; God does not want man's mind.

If you ask, How am I to know the difference between a natural sentiment and a spiritual thought? Why, in this way. You will find a human sentiment is exciting in its character; a natural thought or sentiment elates you, while a spiritual thought gives you the impression of the greatness of it. You are subdued with the greatness of it. A human sentiment, on the contrary, excites you just as in a revival meeting. But there is sure to be depression after it. Whereas the effect of the mighty power of God in the word has the result of making me long to be alone, that I may know the virtue of what my ear has listened to, and my heart has rested on. That is a very different effect.

Still I can understand the difficulty; we are but poor creatures, and have all been affected more or less by beautiful sentiments, and we know the exhilarating effects they have had on us; but we also know that they do not last. It is "like the crackling of thorns under a pot." But the divine has a subduing effect, and yet it lays hold of you; and it shews the blessedness of divine teaching. Still we know how difficult

it is to keep clear of it. For instance, suppose a meeting in a low state, and some one gives out a hymn of an exciting character to raise the tone of it. There may be a thrill, for a moment, but it is soon over. It is mere excitement. There is no excitement in the divine circle. There is a sense of the divine; a sense that the blessed Lord claims me; it is not the expulsive power of a new affection, but of a new Person. It is a very blessed thing, but I am not a bit elated by it; on the contrary, I am sensible of the weight, of the blessedness of it. In one sense it puts me out in order to take possession.

At Gilgal I am a new man. I am entirely apart from the activities of the natural man, amiable or not; Christ is all. There must be nothing of myself—no human activities at all. Of course there is the vessel still. The vessel is the body, and the body is the Lord's and He can use it. But Christ is everything. This is a very practical thing, and I love the subject; because I believe if the soul gets hold of the difference between Marah and Gilgal, it gets a wonderful lift. I often think what a relief it would have been to me had I known it sooner. I have got rid of the old thing, and now I am coming on to learn what suits Christ.

But you may say, Still the old thing comes back again, and what are we to do with it? John xiii. just answers that. In Colossians, iii. you get

standing, in John xiii., state. The Lord there says, I will wash your feet, for "if I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." I have gone into heaven, and I cannot have you there with me unless you are clean, for nothing that defileth can enter there. It is not merely forgiveness; it is removal of defilement. Not forgiveness only, but I am washed—washed and wiped; that there may be no sense of defilement. You cannot be in heaven with the sense of defilement? Peter was very devoted, and had great love for the Lord; but he was not in communion, for if you are in communion there will be no reserve between you and the Lord.

In Hebrews you get into the holiest, but there you feel the perfect One has had to be "rent" to let you, the imperfect one, in. But supposing I fail now. Here John xiii. 8 comes in. The Lord says, I will wash your feet so that there may not be a shadow of reserve on your heart touching that thing in which you failed. The action, perhaps, may be rapid or slow; you will generally find that it is in proportion to the depth of the offence; the deeper the offence, the slower generally the recovery. In Numbers xix. we have the ashes of the red heifer, and the running water—the Spirit—for applying them. The ashes are the token that judgment has been here. *Has been*, not, *is*; it could not be ashes if it were here now. Ashes are the

token of accomplished judgment. And what does it bring to your soul? The knowledge that Christ has borne the judgment of God for that bit of self-gratification in which you indulged. It had disturbed your communion. Would that we were more sensitive as to this!

But let me add one thing: You cannot disturb communion unless you first have it. You may have affection for Christ, and yet may never have joined Him in the new place where He is, and therefore you have not communion with Him. It would have broken the disciples' hearts not to have joined Him where He was going; He had so won their hearts that separation from Him would have been unbearable. They would have said like Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee." But I have not to say this, for He tells me He wants me to be with Him, blessed be His name! And yet how loth we are to get into the new place! How contented to have "no part with Him," although not a shadow of sin is left; in the eye of God the root, the whole thing, is judged in the cross. It is not that I am forgiven; that which I deserved He bore, and I am clear, but it is only in the new place that I can "have part" with Him.

I have said so much upon Gilgal because of its importance; it is just this: the old man is left outside. When a man is enlisted, he is brought to the barracks, and once within the gates, he

leaves behind all the old things which, as a civilian, belonged to him; he is turned into a new kind of person, he drops the dress, and walk, and the tastes he had in former times, and he is brought within the barrack gates, in order to be fitted for the king's army. That is what Gilgal is; we are brought inside the gates.

Let us see then, what the Barracks are. First of all, we are in the new place; the old thing is gone in the death of Christ; it is all left behind. We are dead with Him, and now raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. I am not going to have, in this new place where I am, any of that which I had before.

How is this effected practically? We get an instance in Paul, when he says, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." It is not the question whether it is good or bad. People draw distinctions and talk of what is good. What does Paul say of it in Philippians? "But what things were *gain* to me, those I counted loss for Christ." He not merely gave up his sins, but he gave up his righteousnesses too. He was glad to give them up for the righteousness in Christ. He says, I would be found "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Not my sins, but "my own righteousness;" what was "gain to me;" all that was gain to me as a man; it is gone, and

I come out on a new principle, to do everything in the name of Christ. Thus I am *qualified*.

You do not get Ephesian walk in Colossians. You get a good deal of what is very nice; but the saint is going on to, and looking to be prepared for, the walk which you get in Ephesians. Do you say, This is too high for us. The fact is, we have all missed the mind of God, we have been calling low things by high names, assuming Ephesian walk where there is no Ephesian walk at all.

You may be on your way to heaven, as in Hebrews; that is the wilderness walk, but Ephesian walk is standing for Christ here; above my circumstances for Christ, like Stephen. Or like the woman I have already spoken of, not only beautiful in her wilderness character, working her way through it, but when the test comes, proved to be superior to her circumstances, and able to stand for Christ. She got the power for it, by going up to the Christ's place. If Stephen had not gone up, he could not have acted here in the power of Christ. That is the power Paul speaks of when he says, "That the power of Christ may rest upon me." I get it by going up; it is mine, but if I do not go up, I have not got it. Hence it is, "*Hereby* shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites."

Well, now, we are inside the barrack gates, and the first thing we come to inside is the passover. Here the recruit is to be fitted for service for the Lord, and the first great qualification is, to learn what the love of Christ is in bringing me there.

Do you say, Could I not learn that on earth? No, you could not learn it in the same way. On earth you are surrounded with all the hindrances, like a man at his daily business. It is not in the press of business that he learns what a happy home he has. It is when he comes home, and sits in the circle of his family, that his heart deepens in the sense of his happy home, and what a highly favoured man he is to have such circumstances. This was not the thing before him in the pressure of business; it is not there that he can enjoy the love of his home. Well, now, when do I enjoy Christ's love? When do I learn His heart? When I am there in the scene of unspeakable delight, with the sense "There is not a cloud above, not a spot within." What occupies me there? I dwell on the love that brought me there, and the manner of that love too. There is nobody who knows anything of the heart but can affirm that it is so. When you are at ease in your circumstances, you enjoy the love of anybody most. Suppose you think of a parent's love to his child; it is when he is in happy circumstances he will have the greatest sense of it. When the child is ill, he is full of interest and

anxiety about it, and sympathises with it to the utmost degree; but, I ask, When does he *enjoy* that child most? when it is ill? No, when it recovers—when it is quite well. And so God says, “He will rest in his love.” When? When all is over; when all the work is known; He will then “joy over you with singing.” Because there will then be nothing to hinder the heart from going fully out. Thus it is in the passover, in the land, that we get the deepest sense of the love of Christ.

Now turn to Exodus xii. Here we have the passover in Egypt. I want you to see the difference between the passover in Egypt and the passover in Canaan. I often adduce this to shew what a difference a *place* can effect. It is the same feast, and yet they are quite different. There were no bitter herbs in Canaan; in Egypt there were.

The passover in Egypt is, typically, what Paul went through in the three days after his conversion; he was feeding on the death of Christ; tasting in his soul the sense of what Christ passed through when He bore the judgment due to him. In this passover I am sheltered by the blood, and feeding on the sacrifice. That was what Paul went through in those three days: he learned what Christ went through to set him without a cloud in the brightest glory.

How often at the Lord's table we hear only

of our sins having been put away. Well, that is the passover in Egypt. The Lord's supper is to call *Christ* to your remembrance, not *your benefits*. You cannot lose your benefits; but it is when you are most in the enjoyment of the benefits, that you most dwell on the Benefactor who brought you into the benefits.

At the passover in Canaan we are on heavenly ground. It is like Deuteronomy xxvi.: I am brought up to the place; I am put on a new level; not on the level of Adam, but on the level of Christ. What am I thinking about now? I am thinking of the love of His heart in bringing me to this wonderful position, and calling me to remember what He did for me, and to sit at His table in remembrance of Him. Nowhere should we get such a sense of the love of Christ as at the Lord's supper, when we see how that love led Him to go through death for us. Paul could say, His work has cleared away everything, and now I can go up alongside of Him. I know what He went through for me, and now I want to be where He is; and I believe, beloved friends, the more deeply I get acquainted with that realm of glory where He is, the more my heart will revert to what that blessed One went through to bring me to that blessed position. See what they do when they are there with Him in the Revelation: "And when those living creatures give glory and honour and thanks to

him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." And again, "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation." Crowns are not pieces of metal; they are the sense that I have reached the summit, and that there I can fall down before Him and say, I owe all this to Thy death. Hence you get in Ephesians, "That ye may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." That can be only known by a person in heaven; I am there, and I am remembering how I got there. He went down to death for me, and "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "But God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"—*sinners*, mark! not friends. And the further I go on, and the more I know of the place where that love has brought me, the greater will be the sense I have of it.

My knowledge of His love grows the way in which a tree grows, higher and deeper; the higher the tree grows, the bigger the trunk becomes, so that the trunk is always the thickest part of the tree. And so the first acquaintance I have

had with the love of Christ always has the largest and deepest place in my soul. That is what He did for me, and that is first love. The farther you advance, the more that deepens. Look at a tree; which part is the thickest? That which grew first. Thus the first thing I was acquainted with as a believer was the love which led Christ to go down to death for me. Can I get any lesson now better fitted to qualify me than that? No. Well, what shall I do? I will stand for Him here. It is love for Him that makes me stand for Him. I am made a soldier in a moment. I say, you have touched my object, and I am sensitive to a degree. It is not a question of *who* has done it, but that you have touched *Christ*. I sometimes illustrate it by shewing how a hen acts with her brood. She is one of the most timid of animals, but let a dog approach her brood; she is a soldier in a moment, and no dog will face her. She is transformed in a moment, by simple affection, into the most valiant of beings for the object of her affection; if you ever saw it, you would never forget it. Thus if I have a heart for Christ, I must stand for Him, and I cannot do anything unbecoming His name. I could not do a thing that would in any way compromise Him.

The second thing we find after Gilgal, inside the barrack gate is, that the manna ceased, and they ate the old corn of the land. I am not going to say much on that, though it is a subject of much

interest. The old corn was not till Christ "sat down." It began when the Holy Ghost came down uniting us to Christ, and thus connecting us with the old corn of the land; but we have manna all the way up. This is the comfort for a person who touches manna at all. As a poor sinner he has had the pardon of his sins, and he feeds on Christ's death, and now he has the manna all the way; and this is true of every believer.

The old corn of the land is another thing; it is not what Christ was upon the earth, but what He is in glory. Would you not like to feed on Him thus? Would you not like to know what He is now? I feel humbled when I think how little I know of what Christ is at this moment. If I did, I should be sure to do the right thing in the place where I am.

The simple exposition of the two is this. Manna is what He was; the old corn of the land is what He is. Surely every true heart that has known what He was, must long to know Him as He is. Thus the apostle speaks in Philippians, "That I may know him"—that is, *as He is*—"and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." That I may know Him where He is, and then come down here to suffer for Him. You may say, this is vastly beyond us. Well, if you admit that, it is humbling, and you cannot boast. A child may say, I have

finished that book ; but, the teacher says, you have not got to the end yet ; you have to learn much more. So we : we often think we have learned all, when we are only at the beginning. In one way there is nothing actually new to learn, because what we have to learn is what we already possess. We have to grow in it, and to learn on, and if we do not, we are not enjoying it.

Any person who knows anything about history, knows that many of those who were born princes, were a long time before they found out what it was to be princes ; and often called themselves princes before they knew what it meant. I often think that is the way with us. We talk of our position and of being here for Christ—like an army in review. Where do you get the right idea of it ? I must learn it in His presence where He is. That is the only way to learn it. And you come out having fed on the old corn of the land, your heart impressed with a fresh sense of His love, and of His power also. You must know union before you can have power, and you can only know it in the place where He is.

To stand for Christ is what we are called to do ; and thus it is that we are prepared and qualified for it.

(J. B. S.)

CONFLICT.

JOSHUA v. 13-15; vi. 1-16.

HERE we have a type of the heavenly warfare, and it is important for us to understand, because the child of God is never out of warfare. If you look along the line you will see this is the case. There is Pharaoh in Egypt; Amalek in the wilderness; Balaam when you leave the wilderness; and in the land there is the greatest force of the enemy, the seven nations arrayed against the heavenly position.

In the world, Satan is against even a poor sinner. For the apostle says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the *god of this world hath blinded* the mind of them which believe not." Pharaoh overcome, you get into the wilderness and find Marah; you drink death, you are sustained by Christ in that place. But then Amalek comes out to fight—to intimidate you—to dispute the fact that you are to take this position. Here you will find two things: one, the intercession of Christ to support you; and the other, if I may use a familiar expression, you shew fight. Joshua

took men and went out to fight Amalek ; and at the same time intercession was the real help.

Let me give you an illustration. The Lord said to Peter : " Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." There was intercession ; not for his salvation—he was saved : it was that his faith might not fail. But was Peter ready for the fight ? On the contrary, he trusted himself to the high priest's house, and was pleased when there, to find a fire. But the devil was there too. They did not see the devil, but he was there to prevent Peter from being a dependent man. That was not the heavenly battle. Satan seeks by all these snares to keep us from the place of dependence, which is the wilderness.

Now go on to Numbers xxi. There the people are outside the wilderness ; and here you find a great many believers now, really established in grace, knowing what God has done for them and in them, having life in Christ, and the Holy Ghost in them, as in John iii. and iv. The brazen serpent was on the very edge of the wilderness ; the people are outside, as to state, and thinking perhaps that all will be plain sailing now, when Sihon king of the Amorites comes against them, and they fight him, and the Lord delivers them. That was a battle, but it was not a heavenly battle. They are now out of the wilderness and going on

to Canaan, and they have this desperate battle on the way. Like a man in Hebrews; he is going on to heaven, but not there yet. A saint soon discovers if he is going to heaven; but there is such a thing as being *in* heaven and going on to it at the same time. "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood," the apostle says, "striving against sin." That was death—martyrdom; and I have no doubt at all that many devoted men of God, have had their battles this side Jordan. They suffer greatly, but they seek a religious position here; like the two and a half tribes, who wanted a place to settle in on this side of Jordan.

What we discover practically in this is, that we are not to acquire in these battles; though we conquer in the place, we are not to occupy the place. On the other hand, when I come to heavenly battles, all I gain is my possession—my right. To illustrate my meaning, Luther was backed up by the Elector of Saxony, and as a result he had a status here. But that is all wrong. If you establish a religious system in the world you are all wrong. You must not acquire possession where you win the battle, unless it is on the other side of Jordan.

Consequent upon these great battles, another terrible foe arises; that terrible foe is Balaam, and many a strong man has fallen down through him. What is Balaam? Balaam is Satan acting

on the susceptibility of your nature. You are invited out to some social party, and you accept it because it suits you naturally, and you are led away. Most of the unsuited marriages result from Balaam. If your natural predilections lead you into a circle, or class of society, where those predilections are gratified, that is the snare of Balaam. I dread the word "social," for I know what a host of mischief lies under that word. First, people are invited out, and that brings them into worldly associations with their attendant follies. Look at children, where do they pick up the notions many of them have? At school, from their companions. It is surprising what things people learn in company with others. If you were across Jordan, a dead man, you would not be invited out, for a dead man would have no interest in the things here. If I have taken the place of being dead, I have got greater happiness on that side Jordan than I can possibly have on this. That is the point. It is not assuming anything, but the things here have no interest for me.

I am sure I am addressing those who, if invited to partake in some kind of amusement, would find it no amusement at all, and why? Because they have higher pleasures. Like the queen of Sheba, it is the better things which enable me to surrender the things here. It is of no use denouncing them. I have done it myself, but I

have found it was useless. You may relieve your conscience, but you will free no one from them in that way. Let them get the better things, and the others will drop off like dead leaves. Just as with a child. If you want to take a dangerous thing out of his hand, offer him something bright. That is the superior thing, the eclipsing power. I have said to myself before now, "That is a thing I can never give up;" but it dropped off when I got the better thing, and I did not feel it because I had heavenly joys. Just as in the case of a certain shrub, the old leaf does not fall off until the new one is formed. It is what I call the expulsive power of a new Person. It is not a *thing* now, but a *Person*. A person contains much more than any amount of things can contain. There is great variety about a person. And there is *endless* variety in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we knew Him better, and studied Him more, we should be constantly making fresh discoveries of His worth every day.

We come up, then, into the land, and here is the proper christian conflict, which is really to bring out the heavenly Christ on earth. Do you say, I am not up to that battle? I was never in it, it is quite beyond me? Well, I say, are you set for it, or, would you like only to *look* at it? A good many people like to see reviews, as they set forth the idea of a battle, and I am afraid that is too much the way in which the warfare in Ephesians

is read; it is only a review to many, not the real conflict.

Well, what is the conflict for? It is to be a heavenly man; we have a heavenly country. Israel contended for the land. The crusaders are to me a very interesting people, because they risked their lives in order to get the holy land out of the hands of the heathen and the Saracen; they died for it, and their wars were called "the holy wars." The idea was good, but it was carried out wrongly. The idea was to get space for Christ upon this earth. What would be the right thing then? The right thing is to get *moral* space for Christ. They fought to get Palestine for Christ. Our conflict is to stand here as heavenly men for a heavenly Christ.

It is not Christ in humiliation we are to present, but the heavenly Christ.. What does Paul say? "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." It is the Man in the glory we are to present. It is the corn of the land I am to feed on. Therefore we go to the battle. If I take the antitype, I am to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." That is the corn of the land. I am to set forth a heavenly man in every circle and relationship here. In the practice of Peter's epistles you get nothing about the family, nor in Romans. Why is this? Because there you

are not high enough. You are there a delivered sinner on the earth. In Ephesians you are a heavenly man, so you can come down to the lowest point. It is the height at which you are that enables you to come down, and with the power that belongs to that exalted position. He has passed into the heavens, and not merely into them, but He is *higher* than the heavens. Hence everything is to be done according to this position. That is the wonderful character of Ephesian practice.

Nothing can be plainer than that the conflict is to bring out a heavenly man, in the several circles in which you are found on earth. I count seven circles in the Ephesians; but no matter how many there are, read Ephesians iv. and v. and you will find there is not a single thing there that could be carried out but in heavenly power.

Paul says, "That I may know him," that is as He is *now*. And I ask, would you not like to know Him as He is now? Do you think it would content a devoted wife or child, to be able to say, I knew my husband or my father ten years ago, but I do not know him now? Why, we never heard of such a thing. Yet that is really the way some think of Christ. They know Him as the Saviour who died here, but they do not know Him as He is now—the glorified Man.

But you ask, who is up to it? I go with you there. I know how little I am up to

it; but I cannot shrink from what God has called me to; I cannot shrink from Philippians iii.: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Again, "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." That was not salvation; Paul had that. True, He *is* my Saviour, but the grace of God is so large that it would lead you on from that, to know Him as the Head of His body, the church; and when you come to know Him as your Head, oh, what happiness!

And now what you are called upon to do is to display that One upon earth, and therefore there is conflict. Satan urged man to the climax of wickedness—to put that blessed One upon the cross. Man's first sin was to turn his back upon God; for his second, there is no cloak; he turned God's Son out of the earth. I think people are not sensible enough of this. They do not walk about with the sense of it upon them. They admit the first, but not the second. And now what God has done is this; in His wondrous grace, He says: I have chosen you before the foundation of the world that you should be holy, and without blame before me in love. You are members of the body of Christ, and I want you to display Him here upon the earth. What is all the teaching for? What is the point aimed at in ministry? "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of

the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature and fulness of Christ." That is not something hereafter. Speaking to the gifts, Paul says, you are to work on in order to reach this. You answer you will never get people to it. Well, do not stop working on to it. That is the end of all teaching ; and if the end of teaching, it is also the end of warfare.

You find in Ephesians vi. : " 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." That is, not the gospel merely, but the *mystery* of the gospel. What Paul wanted really, was to give out this truth : Christ, the heavenly Christ ; that is the conflict. To me it is affectingly interesting. Do not you see, that when Satan had brought man to the climax of wickedness, to refuse God's Son on this earth, and God had raised Him up to His own right hand, God brought out, that Christ's body was here ; and we members of it, now belonging to the place where He is, are to be the expression of Him down here in the very place where He was refused. Do not you see that all the force of the enemy must be directed against that ? Well, that is the conflict.

But God has His object, and He will support His own in maintaining it. And I am sure it is a great comfort to us to know it *is* God's object to maintain for Christ here, and if I know

that, I need not fear any opposition. I say it is no matter who opposes: I have God's object before me, not my own will. But there *will* be bitter opposition. Yes, what is God's object has always been opposed by Satan. Open your Bibles anywhere you like, and you will find it so. You will find that what is God's object at the moment, is what is most opposed; nothing is more striking. When God sent His Son into the world; who opposed Him most? Why, the Pharisees. Those pious men who stood up for the keeping of the law in its strictest sense; those before whom other men bowed down because of their piety; these were the men who opposed Christ. The Pharisees opposed Him when here, and the Sadducees when He had left the world.

Who would have thought that those who were the sticklers for the law, the strictest and the straitest as to religion, the Jews, should be the ones to oppose the Lord! so much so that when the Lord cures a man on the sabbath day, they declare He is not fit to stay here. Can you understand the inveterate unrelenting character of the opposition against what God's heart is set upon? Paul was left alone; all men forsook him; but the Lord stood by him. And Paul was not a bit baffled. Read what he says to Timothy in his second epistle to him. He wrote that epistle after being thus forsaken, and you will see he is not discouraged. On the contrary, he tells Timothy to

‘commit the things which he had heard to faithful men who should be able to teach others also.’

Well, this is the conflict, and if you get into it, you may have tough battles to fight while standing for the Lord, or moving on as a heavenly man, for Satan is a relentless foe. If we read Peter or Hebrews, we see that saints there written to had the devil to contend with, but not as here; it was as “a roaring lion.” The desperate character of Satan’s opposition in heavenly places is that it is invisible.

Turn now to the chapter before us. The first thing we need is a great power: we are to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” This word is borrowed from Ephesians i. It is the “exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.” Now I have got it, and I am to be strong in it. “There stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand, and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us or for our enemies? And he said, Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” Joshua is not going to battle by himself. Here One appears to him, who comes to encourage him.

Here is the captain of the host—with a drawn sword in his hand. This is the type of the Holy Ghost. “When the Comforter is come . . . he shall testify of me.” That is the object of our conflict. This passage refers to Christ in the glory, not when on earth. When He went up to

heaven the Holy Ghost would testify of Him on the earth. What I am dwelling on now is not the conflict, but the support we have in it. The Holy Ghost is come down here, to be with us, in order to maintain Christ's here. How wonderful this is! But the church has failed as a witness, and why? I will tell you. The church very soon joined affinity with the world, and the Holy Ghost would not help it in coalition with the world. He is against this world, for it has rejected Christ. The Holy Ghost is here to maintain the interests of Christ. Of late the truth has been recovered that the Holy Ghost is here for this purpose. And I press on you, beloved friends, that in Christ's service we are to be independent of the world. If the world aid me in preaching the gospel, I should not accept it. Would you? I say, I cannot have it, for I have a greater power, which is against the world.

Well, that is what I start with. I start with this great power that will not co-operate with the world. You might as well expect fire to co-operate with water, as to expect the Holy Ghost to co-operate with the world. The Holy Ghost is here branding the world with sin; how then could He co-operate with it? He convicts the world of sin like a criminal in the dock. The criminal may not own it, but he is nevertheless convicted. I do not want to read the newspaper to know how wicked the world

is. What tells me how wicked the world is, is that the Holy Ghost is here. That is enough. His presence here declares the sin of the world. Because Christ has been rejected, the Holy Ghost is here maintaining for Him. So that I see the whole world is a moral desert. I feel that we have lost the sense of this, and that the real cause of all the breakdown is, that the church has lost dependence on the Holy Ghost, that wonderful power with which it started.

In John xv. the Lord tells us how the world hated Him, and that it would hate us. We may feel, Why should the world hate us? It is a bitter thing when we are trying to do them good, to bring to them the highest kind of benevolence—the riches of Christ—that they should hate us. What is the reason? It is because Satan would not have *Him*. You cannot account for the enmity unless you understand that the devil's hatred to Christ is at the bottom of it.

Well, what a wonderful thing it is for Joshua to be able to say, I am not going to war in my own strength! As a great general comes out with his commissariat, his ammunition and his reserves, so Joshua comes out, he is not going to war at his own charges.

So we may say we *have* the power: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." Our attitude is, we are not going to give in. We are to be like what is called in war, "the forlorn

hope." That gives us the idea, though it is an unhappy name. The forlorn hope is a number of men who venture to make a breach in the fortress, even if it cost them their lives. They take their lives in their hands in order to succeed, and so they are called a forlorn hope. There is no hope for them at all unless they succeed, but they generally do succeed. In our case I do not like the title, but that is really our place; we venture as it were to make the breach, but it is with sure confidence, because we have a power not our own; we know the opposition we are going to meet, still we go cheerfully forward; and we succeed.

Now I turn to what is against us; that is in chapter vi. in type. I have already said how very important it is we should know Paul's doctrine, for if we do not, we cannot understand the type; and the value of the type is, that in your practice you must never be below it. You may say you are not up to the antitype, but the antitype alone can explain the type, because it is spiritual. The antitype of Jericho is wicked spirits in heavenly places. (Eph. vi.) It is not a city. The type is a city, and the idea of a city is a concentration of everything found in this world. Exeter would not be a city, if it had not a cathedral in it. Liverpool was not a city some time since because of this. It did not comprise within itself every organisation. When

speaking of some countries we speak of the city. We talk of Paris as representing France, because the city is the concentration of the country. So it is here; Jericho is the type of this opposition—this organised resistance. The thing they saw before them was a city walled up; no probability of getting possession. The conflict with us is to represent Christ here; and the force against us is typified by this city; and you cannot, beloved friends, have too great an idea of the character of the opposition that there is against you.

A good general never underrates his foe; and one great cause of failure with us is, that we do not properly estimate the world's opposition. I believe it is a great thing when the soul has the sense of the inveterate character of the opposition to Christ. It is a wonderful help, because it keeps you so on your guard. You read of battles, and generally, in a case of failure, you will find that the general underrated his foe. I say, do not underrate the world's opposition. I always find that the man who has most of Christ is the one who has the keenest apprehension of Satan. I do not mean common fear, but that he foresees the danger. "We are not ignorant," the apostle says, "of his devices." It is his wiles we have to contend with, and that is the dangerous character of it. If I see a man coming to knock me down I see what

he is about. But now it is Satan's wiles ; like the spring-guns in former days ; a person walking along on the grass touched a secret, hidden spring, and the gun turned round and shot him. That is like the desperate character of the warfare I have to contend with. He is an invisible foe ; he does not shew his face. He is a desperate foe, who knows everything about me, and knows how to touch me in the very point where I am weakest, and it is my weak point he works on, but he does it with his wiles. That is the kind of foe I have to deal with, and his great object is to prevent me from being a representation of Christ.

You may preach justification by faith ; that will be tolerated to a great extent ; but if you teach about the body of Christ, you are sure to be opposed. Mind, I do not say, do not do it ; but if you do, I promise you you will be at war. If a Christian would have an easy path, let him have nothing to do with the church at all. That is what I have heard. If you would have a smooth and easy path, have nothing to do with the church. You may preach the gospel, and have easy times comparatively ; but if the church is your interest, you will have many a sorrow.

Now having dwelt on these two things—the power for us and the power against us—I trust you will, beloved friends, work it out like the Israel of that day.

We will now go on to the characteristics of the

warrior. There are two ; and you get them both in the type and in the antitype. In Joshua the first was the armed men ; and the second, the trumpeters. So in Ephesians vi. we find armour and prayer : armour for Satan and prayer for God. Armour against Satan alone succeeds. Prayer is, I am always depending on God, never *independent of Him*. *Independence* is when a man does a thing for God of his own will. Uzzah was independent when he put his hand to the ark. Who told him to do that ? You say he did it for God. But it was contrary to the word of God. He was independent. *Independency* is a worse sin than what is called carnality. The latter is a disgrace to *you*, but in the former case you have attempted to do something for God, called it by a fine name perhaps, and did the very thing that God did not want you to do.

I will now just touch on the armour. I am not going through it, although it is very interesting, and Satan wants to spoil it if he can. First, be girt about with truth ; next the breastplate of righteousness ; be honest and upright. But that is not all. You may have these, and now, Satan may say, I will work you up and make you lose your temper if I can. Now you have spoiled it all, you have lost your temper. Your feet should have been shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We have often witnessed this.

Beloved friends, it is sad to a degree, that the man who may be most right is often most intemperate, because he is so indignant with wrong. But "the wrath of man worketh not the praise of God." You may be indignant, but not on your own account. You get chafed with evil, and then you lose your temper because there is a point not armed; you are not "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Then there is the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. There are several different parts in the armour, and none are aggressive, but all protective excepting the last. The last is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

We find an interesting thing in Peter: a woman can win her husband without the word; that is, by the effect of the word upon herself. Even that would not be aggressive; it would be what she is through the word. I would press on you the importance of having the armour on. There is nothing perhaps in which we fail so much, even in our families, as in being without the armour. There is no place where we are found out so quickly as in our own families, because they know our weak points well. The great thing is to be armed. If invulnerable, I am invincible.

Take an illustration. If I were a child, or a wife in a worldly family, I would be in complete subjection to the father or husband. That is, I

would surrender my liberty to any extent, but my conscience to no extent. If he said, You are not to go out of this house any Sunday, I could say, Very well, you shall be implicitly obeyed; but if he said, You must go to such-and-such a place on the Lord's day—one which would compromise my allegiance to Christ, I reply, No, that involves my conscience, and that is for God; that you cannot govern. You can have the right over *me* to any extent, but over my conscience, never. I could not go there. You can surrender your liberty to any extent, but your conscience to no extent. For instance: you should never join in their amusements. You lose power the moment that you do. I know it is not easy, it goes against the grain, I have learnt that, even in talking in the train; I used to do it, but I never do it now, I sit in silence. They may think me a stupid sort of man, but I cannot help that. By-and-by I get my opportunity, and I can have my say for Christ. But you must thus keep armed; if drawn away, you cannot present the gospel to your company. There will be no ring in it; no divine power.

If you are a child in a worldly family, do not join in their social gatherings; but be ready to carry a message, do anything you can for them, be the most ready to serve in the house—the man-of-all-work if you like. Your place up there above is a divine, heavenly one, and yet.

you are to be down here in the character of Christ, really meeting them in all their requirements.

That is the way the Lord was here. He never went anywhere to please Himself, but to do others a service. I am speaking now of the heavenly walk; that is beyond the wilderness walk. The difference between the heavenly walk here, and the walk in the wilderness, is that, in the heavenly, you are always superior to your circumstances.

My former illustration of the poor woman whose benefactor became her enemy through her faithfulness will apply here. You could not account for the enmity, unless you saw that it was against Christ; and the more distinctly she is for Christ, the more distinct is the opposition. You cannot account for it in any other way.

The second characteristic is the habit of dependence upon God, and there, as in Ephesians, the climax is reached. "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 utterance may be given unto me."

One thing more I must say is, that the greatest thing to mark you is patience. We all know how we need this when we are opposed. When there is great opposition, then is the time we especially need patience, and here, too often, we fail. Patience is a wonderful thing. We see

it here. For seven days they went round the city, and it must have been a very irksome thing for them; not a shout is heard till the seventh day. What a wonderful sense they must have had of the word of God and dependence upon Him! Like a child in a worldly family, they were depending on God. They go round the city seven days, and on the last day seven times. Patience, wonderful patience. Nothing keeps a man in confidence in God like patience. We see nothing like this in our day. I believe we do not trust God enough. I believe the incident given in Samuel at the close of that period is an encouragement to us. God came in, in thunder, at the very close. Joshua was in the beginning. God brought out Samuel in the very close. And we have the same God. It is said, God thundered, and there was a great discomfiture.

I close with one remark on another scripture, and that is in Acts xvi. Here we get an instance shewing all the principles brought out, and I commend it to your attention. It was the first time Paul came into Europe, and I believe the Spirit of God sets forth here what was specially needful in Europe. In Europe the church first accepted the countenance of the world. But the Book of the Acts is a book of principles by which we have to travel every day. In Joshua we see the route we travel and the principles brought out.

Paul is called in a vision to go down into Macedonia to help them, and he goes, and does not meet a man. This was number one nonplus. Patience was needed. He expected a man, for a man appeared to him, not an angel. Then he goes to a place where women were accustomed to pray, and here he has to wait, and at length a woman, who did not belong to the place at all, but to Thyatira, her heart being opened, attended to the things Paul said, and being baptised with her household, she says to Paul, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." There is nothing about a Macedonian yet; but he goes into her house and stays there; and Satan seeing him in this apparent dilemma, sends him one of his instruments, a woman possessing a spirit of divination, and she says, I will give you countenance. Accordingly she follows them about many days, and cried saying, "These men be the servants of the most high God who shew unto us the way of salvation."

Look at the patience of Paul; for many days he bears this, but at length he will stand it no longer, and commands the spirit to come out of her. He refused to be countenanced by Satan, and what was the consequence? There was not a power in the place which was not down upon him, and the most striking and the most awful thing about it is, that the very Satan who a

few hours ago was proclaiming him the servant of the most high God, is the one that now rouses the people to destroy him. The whole town is roused against him, populace, magistrates, lictors, police, to put Paul in prison, and Satan seems to win the day. Satan might have been exulting perhaps, but it was done in the most illegal way, to use no stronger term. It was the most unjust thing ever done to a man who had done no wrong to put him in prison, and then to make his feet fast in the stocks. But he did not lose his courage or energy. On the contrary, at midnight he is praying and giving thanks to God, quite as content as if he were at home. What would you have thought if you had passed by that prison? I often think if we had patience to walk about in simple confidence in God, how He would interfere for us and deliver us. What a wonderful thing to have that confidence! Little Paul knew, shut up in prison at the silent hour of midnight, when everything was quiet, how God would interfere for him. That a great earthquake would come and shake off all their chains, and throw every door open. The jailer who had retired to rest in his indifference, is at last awakened up, and springing in calls for a light, brings out his prisoners, and falling at their feet says, "What must I do to be saved?" I take it that he was the man Paul was sent for. He is the first man of Macedonia we read of. What a change! How

the populace must have felt next morning when they heard that Paul and Silas were the guests of the jailer!

I believe that even now if we really stood for the Lord, He would bring something remarkable out in the spot where we had stood for Him. I could tell you of spots where He did. God prepares a table for us in the wilderness in the presence of our enemies. Do not you think He gives us manifold more in this present world? I believe it most implicitly. Why do not we *know* it? We do not believe in it. We do not walk on in simple, blessed patience, waiting, in confidence in God. He will make a table for us in the presence of our enemies, and what a wonderful table was here! Why, the tables are turned completely. Why? Because they believed God; they knew He would support His own Object, and that He would stand by them as long as they stood in simple confidence in Him.

Well, I trust each one of our hearts will be moved into more faithfulness to Him. Some here are young; you have not entered the battle-field yet. Well, it is everything for a person's heart to be led out in simple affection for the Lord. If it is, he will soon be found in the conflict for Him, maintaining for a heavenly Christ in the very spot where He has been rejected.

(J. B. S.)

PRESENTATION IN GLORY.

THERE is a danger that, in dwelling, as we properly do with delight of heart, upon the blessedness that accrues to us and which awaits us at the return of the Lord, we overlook more or less that unique joy to Himself of which His coming is the prelude or the precursor. We carry our native selfishness so far into spiritual things, that even the Lord's return is regarded a thousand-fold more in relation to what it eventuates in for ourselves, what it will emancipate us from, and what it will usher us into, than we do in respect to Him who is *the* Object of that great event.

Both as to grace and as to glory, we need to be reminded that we are but the means to an ordained end. And that end is the heading up of all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, according to those divine counsels which subsisted before the world began. No less in the ultimate display than in the prior working out, we but constitute the prescribed means which God's wisdom has devised for the manifestation, both now and then, of what is worthy of His exalted Son.

Nor is it of secondary importance that we should understand this, seeing that it clears the ground for Him, and sets us in our true and subordinate position. For it need scarcely be observed that, unless we recognise in Him the end and object of the infinite and eternal counsels of God, we shall be exalting ourselves, corporately at least, if not subordinating Him. For a little while, it is true, He stooped lower than the angels, and even humbled Himself to a depth below normal humanity—"the dust of death"—but only thereby afforded a new motive for the Father's love, and acquired title to an unprecedented exaltation. In working out thus the counsels of eternal glory in deep and dire humiliation, He was never less (our souls rejoice in the thought) than the very object of those counsels Himself, who was over all, God blessed for ever!

But I desire to trace, by reference to a few passages, what the word conveys as to the church's presentation to Him in glory.

In Genesis ii. 18-22, we have the primeval foreshadowing of this in that supreme moment when man's help-meet, having been previously formed, was brought by Jehovah-Elohim and presented to Adam as his wife. Without her he was "alone," is the divine word; because, amidst the teeming wealth and beauty of created things, there was nothing to be found capable of striking

a chord in his heart, or of holding that communion with him that his spirit was formed to enjoy. Not a being had been created who was qualified to enter into any apprehension of the workings of his mind in its high estate, or who could appreciate or respond to the pure and perfect affections of his heart.

Three actions are here predicated :

1. The rib is taken out of the man during his deep sleep.

2. Of it the woman is built up.

3. Eve is presented to Adam as his help-meet.

Now the church is surely that suited, and that only suited, help-meet for Christ, the second and glorified Man, the last Adam. According to eternal counsels she is the fruit of the death of Christ. Afterwards she had to be built up for Him ; and lastly she will be presented to Him, that He may have throughout eternity one who shall be to Him and for Him what none else could be, His help-meet, His consort, His joy for ever.

But I proceed to another scripture. In Leviticus xxi. we have instructions given as to the qualifications of her who should be the wife of him who was the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who was consecrated to put on the garments. "The crown of the anointing oil of his God is upon him," remarkable expression, and therefore

it is commanded that "he shall take a wife in her virginity; a widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take, but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife. Neither shall he profane his seed among his people; for I the Lord do sanctify him." The New Testament answer to this word is surely found in 2 Corinthians xi. 2: "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Very evidently the lesson to be deduced from these scriptures is that unsullied holiness must characterise her who is to be in eternal alliance with Christ.

Again, in Colossians i. 21-23, we read: "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made minister." We find distinct traces here of the three things that we noticed in Genesis ii. There

is first of all reconciliation "in the body of his flesh through death;" then this is seen to be in view of presentation in glory by-and-by; while intermediately there is the abiding in the faith, the grounding and settling, and the steadfastness in the hope, or, in other words, glory awaited. (See also verse 28.)

But I turn back now to Ephesians v., as bringing before us in the fullest way both what the eternal counsels have had in view, and the instrumental means for bringing them to pass in a manner adequate to that end. "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify it, purifying 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."

The three things meet us here in their order:

1. He delivered up Himself to death in order to sanctify it. In other words, He entered upon that deep sleep that, by the sacrifice of Himself, a He might have formed *from* Himself (as the blade springs from the grain that has fallen into the ground and died) and also *for* Himself, a sanctified one, suited to enter with Him upon a communion the most profound, and to enjoy an affection the deepest and the most intimate.

2. But if we have been thus reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being recon-

ciled we shall be saved by His life. Thus it is that we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, objects of His constant care, and practically and continuously purified through the washing of water by the word. This is seen, as to the nature of the Lord's service and ministry, much more clearly in verse 29 : "No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the church."

He *nourisheth* the church, which word implies two things : feeding it and educating it, or growth and culture. Thus Paul speaks of Timothy as "a good minister of Jesus Christ, *nourished* up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained." He who gave Himself for the church thus feeds, supports, and educates her for Himself with assiduous and devoted solicitude.

Then, also, He *cherishes* the church, and this word implies two other things. He cheers her with His countenance, and He protects her with His mighty arm, as the object of His ceaseless and His tenderest affection. As the apostle says "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse *cherisheth* her children : so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us."

3. And all this has direct reference to the

presentation in glory: "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." We are to be presented at court, and He must have us worthy of the occasion, above all worthy of Himself! The church is to be in glory, in His glory, spotless, without a trace remaining of sin or imperfection, even as holy and without blame (be it reverently said), as He! And wrinkleless, too! Not the faintest line of care or of decrepitude shall mar her beauteous brow, as, in the lustre of a heavenly bride, she is assimilated to His own likeness for eternity. Remarkably, too, we find a confirmation of this in Revelation xxi. 2, where, after a thousand years of association with Him in heavenly glory, she is beheld in her original freshness and imperishable beauty, "as a bride adorned for her husband."

It is with this in view, this presentation of her to Himself in glory to be His joy for ever, that the Lord bestows such exhaustless and unwearied labours upon the bride. And in the spirit of that thought, that deep desire of His heart, the apostle anticipates his own share therein. "For," says he, "what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at his coming*? For ye are our glory and joy." And again: "To the end he may stablish your hearts

unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." Also: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless *at the coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ." Or in the words of another apostle: "Be diligent that ye may be *found of him* in peace, without spot, and blameless." And again in those of a third: "My children, abide in him: that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be put to shame by him *at his coming*."

We naturally ask, why are these ardent desires for the saints connected so definitely with that one terminus, the Lord's coming? Only one answer is possible: because these inspired apostles were considering, as an artist might look forward to exhibition-day, how their master-pieces would look when the strong light of the glory should be thrown upon them, and how much, and how little the traces of the workman's hand would affect and impress the Lord's heart, and be tributary to His eternal joy!

Jude, another apostle, has also this presentation in glory before his heart, exhorting the saints most pointedly and most powerfully at the close of his epistle, and adding: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless *before the presence of his glory* with exultation [mark that precious word], to the only God our Saviour be glory and ma-

jesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Lastly I would scarcely do more than mention the scene of Revelation xix. The heaven of heavens is full of joy from henceforth: "For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints." But one remark I must make, namely, that while the Lord shews us in His word how devotedly He is engaged in those wonderful services to the church which we have traced from scripture to scripture, there is also this other thing: "Every man that hath this hope in him," in Christ; but what hope? The hope of His coming? No, not exactly, but the hope of being like Him when He comes, and seeing Him in manifested glory—having *this* hope, "purifieth himself even as he is pure." (1 John iii. 3.)!

And so in Revelation xix., the Lamb's wife is seen to have "*made herself ready.*" And again the fine linen which is granted to the bride for her adornment—white in its purity, and lustrous in its beauty—we are told is the *righteousnesses* of saints. The word is in the plural, and indicates undeniably that it is a fabric of our own weaving. How important is this thought, that we are going to wear, in the Lord's immediate presence on that memorable day, those practical works of

righteousness wrought out while in testimony on the earth, after they have been tested by fire.

In these garments white and shining, and made durable for eternity, the church is arrayed for the bridal morning, the marriage of the Lamb; and in that striking description which presents the last and most lovely picture of her beauty, and her blessedness, and in which Scripture parts company with the bride, the Lamb's wife, there occurs that final and that crowning word which nothing can surpass: "Having the glory of God." (Rev. xxi. 11.)

May our hearts be so divinely impressed, no less with the grace than with the magnitude of the Lord's present diligent service to the church, in view of her presentation to Himself in glory, that we who have *this* hope, may be, with only lesser diligence, making ready for Him and for the day of His appearing.

W. R.

IF God speaks I must give the lie to my feelings and everything else. This is what *God* looks at me as: "Quickened together with Christ."
(G. V. W.)

READINGS ON EPHESIANS I.-III.

HERE we get God's mind about us, all the blessedness that is in His mind. Angels, principalities, and powers will learn through us the manifold wisdom of God. Then He unfolds it all. First, our calling; secondly, God's purpose about Christ—His place; thirdly, our inheritance. The close of the chapter puts it all together. All is founded on this title which God takes: "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is only after Christ's resurrection He calls His disciples His brethren. You get in verse 3 this double title. It is the secret of all God's thoughts, that His purpose is to put us into the same place as Christ, and like Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 49.) We shall be as like the second Adam as we have been like the first Adam.

In Matthew xvii. He forbids them to say He was Christ. In chapter xii. He was rejected; chapter xiii. we get the kingdom of heaven; chapter xvi. the church; chapter xvii. the kingdom of glory. But in the end of that chapter He shews where He was leading them (the dis-

ciples). He says to Peter: You and I are children, therefore free: "For me and thee!" Think of the blessed Lord saying that! He puts Peter into this place with Himself. Then He shews His power over creation. He puts Peter in connection with Himself just when He was shewing forth His divine power.

Verse 3. "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That is altogether in contrast with the Jew. They will be blessed with temporal blessings *under* Christ; we get spiritual blessings *in* Christ; He *has* blessed us thus, that is the first wonderful statement. Christ's place comes second; not that it *is* second, but unless we were brought into the place, we could not understand His place.

Verse 4. "Chosen in him before the foundation of the world." We have to go through the world, all of us (speaking generally), but we belonged to heaven before the foundation of the world. "Holy," "love," that is God's nature; we are made partakers of it; that gives capacity for knowing Him. I know not anything of an angel, for I have not his nature, but I am capable of knowing and enjoying God, and in His presence. Verse 4 is what Christ was here; holy, blameless, and always before God in love.

Verse 5. "To the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself." *Children* implies *Father*, but it is always in Christ. He could

not say "according to the good pleasure of his will" in verse 4, for He *could not* have unholy creatures before Him; but here He says it, for, though He might have had servants only, He *chooses* to have children.

Verse 6. He might have said, accepted in *Christ*; no, that would not do, it is in *the Beloved*; accepted according to *that*.

Question. Is "holy, without blame," &c. our state now, or our standing?

Here it is just as it is in God's mind, not as it is in the poor earthen vessel. The extent of God's grace almost alarms people. Do you believe that God loves you as He loves Jesus? If I have glory, it is as Christ.

Question. Do you think we get this without going through Romans or Colossians?

No, but it is of immense moment for us to understand that it is grace, and that according to what God is. The conscience must be reached; God is light and love, and that manifests what *we are*—exposes us. The apostle reasons down from what God is; no one is ever free till he gets that side. Israel in Egypt were sheltered from judgment, but it is a different thing at the Red Sea: there they are told to "stand still and see the salvation of God." I am where God has put me, not where sin has put me. In John iii. you get the two sides. Then my place flows from what God is for me. I get all the love

that was in His heart reigning through righteousness.

The forgiveness of my sins is not according to my need, though it meets my need, of course; but the manner of it is "according to the riches of his grace."

Verses 9-11. "Having made known to us the mystery of his will," &c. Then God says, Now that I have brought you into a capacity to understand, I will make known to you my purpose about Christ.

There is nothing absolutely certain but faith. I may believe there is such a town as Edinburgh, but it is possible an earthquake may have destroyed it: nothing but faith can be absolutely certain. In Hebrews we read "the full assurance of faith." There are three full assurances spoken of. In Colossians it is of understanding; in Hebrews, of hope and faith.

"Prudence" (ver. 8) is an unhappy word here. It is God's mind, His thoughts; not prudence in practice. You get the word in Proverbs. God unfolds to me His thoughts and plans about Christ. He is going to head up everything under Christ as man. We get three reasons for this. In Colossians it is as Creator. In Hebrews (chap. i.), Christ is Heir as Son; and in chapter ii. having been rejected as Christ, He comes out as Son of man, Head over all. "He left nothing that is not put under him." He is seated at the

right hand of God, but He is waiting until the time appointed to take His power and reign over all.

He has this headship as Creator, as Son of God, and as Son of man; personal, relative and positional, Head *over* all, but Head *to* the church which is His body; a head would be incomplete without a body. But then redemption comes in; as a Redeemer He fills it all, not merely as God. We first get the plan of God as regards Christ, then the inheritance.

Verses 12, 13. We are sons by faith, not merely born; quickening and believing come together.

The first part of the chapter is our calling, afterwards we get the inheritance. We get the Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance until Christ comes in His glory.

Question. Does "after that ye believed" suppose an interval?

No, it should be "having believed." It is not that there is an interval, but you must get the things in order.

God could not seal an unbeliever. There is nothing in heaven that I have not got now. Moses and Elias talked with Christ, that was the kingdom; then came the cloud, that was the Father's house; the Father's voice heard speaking from it, and they entered in. That was a new thing; the disciples were afraid.

Question. Does the inheritance include everything heavenly and earthly?

The inheritance takes in all created things. You must not confound it with our calling.

Verses 15-23. We find this distinction of God and Father which we have been speaking of, in the two prayers in the epistle. Here He is looked at as Head over all things.

Three things the apostle prays for.

First. That they might know the hope of the calling.

Second. The riches of the inheritance.

Third. That they may know the power that raised Christ from the dead.

The calling is the first part; then as sons we get the inheritance. They get it because they *are* sons.

There are three callings. In 1 Thessalonians ii. it is: "walk worthy of *God*, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory." In Colossians i.: "walk worthy of the *Lord*." Here it is simply God's calling. Then he goes on to pray that their eyes may be opened.

Question. What is meant by inheritance in the saints?

To Israel God says, the land is mine. He inherited the land in Israel.

We are called to enjoy what is above us, and to inherit what is below us. The crowned elders were higher when they were on their faces

worshipping, than when crowned on their thrones. It is more blessed to be adoring Him than to be in honour oneself.

The word in Revelation iv. 4 is thrones. The translators were afraid to say thrones, so they said seats.

Question. What is the eternal inheritance in Hebrews ix. ?

It is all eternal there. You look at the inheritance in two ways. Peter looks up (1 Pet. i. 4) ; that is eternal.

In Ephesians it is union. In Hebrews, priesthood.

Question. Is not the inheritance in Hebrews in connection with the new covenant which is millennial ?

No. All is eternal there, in contrast to Judaism : he looks at the heavenly calling—a positive thing in contrast to the old. God's side of the new has been accomplished, but it must be made good with the Jew. The principle of the two covenants is different. The blood of the new covenant is shed ; but He had other purposes—the church ; and it is superseded till that be accomplished. We are “ sanctified unto the obedience of Christ.” What delivered us from law was not that it had lost its force, but that we have died with Christ, and you cannot apply the law to a dead man : you cannot charge a dead man with having lust in his heart.

In Romans viii. you get that what the law could not do, God did: "condemned sin in the flesh." It is not that He let it pass; it is done with in the cross. It is not that Christ died for my sins; that is true; but I died with Him. A new subject at the end: what I *am*; not what I have *done*. I have died (by faith, of course). Then there is the new life in Christ, which delights in God's will. Dead to sin in Romans; dead to the world in Colossians; you get not a word of all that in Ephesians; but that which takes me out of my own standing before God: Christ my righteousness, Christ my life. In Colossians you get "risen;" that question is not looked at in Ephesians. There it is dead in sins. If I am alive in my sins, I am dead in them. If I am alive in sins, I am dead to God.

God takes me and Christ, and puts us in the same place. It is new creation here—and there are three aspects of it: Colossians; "Ye are dead." Romans; "Reckon yourselves dead." 2 Corinthians; "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus;" that is carrying it out practically. I am at liberty because I reckon myself dead, and so I can carry it out practically.

In Ephesians I am dead, and quickened together with Christ, and that is new creation. That power that came in, and took Christ from that state of death and put Him at God's right hand, takes us and puts us in Him. The result:

all things under His feet, and He Head over all to His body. He fills everything between hades and the throne of God; fills the whole thing for faith: you cannot put my spirit in a place where Christ has not been.

In chapter ii. 2 we have the Gentiles; in verse 3 the Jews. Verse 2, Satan's power over the world; verse 3, the Jews were far off by nature, but not by position. By position they were near to God—the "elder son."

God does not give two epistles for the same purpose. In Colossians we do not find the Holy Ghost, but we do in Ephesians, therefore there is the strongest possible contrast. "Quickened together with Christ" is a great deal more than merely new life. I am taken out of the condition I was in, and put in Him in the place He is in. I have got divine life, but my standing is in Christ. The position is totally changed. It alters the whole character of the Christian, if he gets hold of it; it is new creation; not merely that I have got a new life, but I have got a totally new position.

We have not to *grow* meet; the growing is all right; but He has *made* us meet. You get the ground of it. We are not in the standing of the old Adam before God at all; a wonderful thing to apply it to oneself, that in the ages to come God is going to shew forth in *me* the exceeding riches of His kindness.

Remarked. What strikes me is that it makes us so small.

It makes us *nothing*; that is the comfort. "By grace ye are saved:" a fact, not a principle. God's salvation is that I am going to be in the same glory as Christ.

Question. Does "not of yourselves" apply to the whole thing?

No; I believe it applies to the faith. Faith is simply the word of God applied to man's soul by the Spirit of God.

When the conscience is awakened it puts God and man in their place.

If I know all that is in your mind I am your equal, as to your mind. The Pharisee and the poor woman (Luke vii.) are an instance. Who was the child of wisdom there? She was kissing His feet, honouring God; that was God's wisdom. I believe there is instinctively in man the consciousness that he has to do with a power that is above him. A thing that reasoning proves is never a fact; it is only a consequence.

Verse 10. "Works foreordained." The works are as much foreordained as I am.

In chapter i. we have the universal thought of Christ Head over all to His body. Here we get a new thing, not a body as in chapter i., but a habitation of God. In chapter iii. 5, "apostles and prophets" are those of the New Testament. In the first place Christ builds, Matthew xvi.

In Peter we have another aspect: built up as living stones. Whenever God has set up man in responsibility, the first thing man does is to fail; then Christ comes and makes good in the second Adam what failed in the first. 2 Corinthians iii., “wise master builder.” When Christ builds, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. In verse 21 we get first it “groweth;” then what God has set up. It is not union here.

Question. When would you say the house will be set up in perfection?

In the heavenly Jerusalem—one (the house) His dwelling place, the other His body. It is union with Christ, the Head, when it is His body or the bride.

Question. The body is not for earth only?

Oh, not at all; it is for ever. There was no union till Christ was glorified in heaven.

The Vine and branches are not the church at all.

I get the house on earth; it will be the temple for ever. Consequent on the Holy Ghost coming down, the members of the body are united to Christ, entirely heavenly. The church was never revealed in the Old Testament, it could not be; not merely that it did not exist, but it could not be revealed until after the cross. You get the same thing in Colossians. You must have Christ glorified first, or you will have a body without a Head.

The church has its connection with Christ, the children with the Father. The Holy Ghost coming from the Father puts us in the place of sons, and unites us with the Head; that is heavenly; Christ come out, man gone in; the veil rent. Colossians i. 26: you cannot have the Jews and the church revealed on earth at the same time, for they set aside each other. The Song of Solomon is quite a different principle; going after Him, and getting Him, and losing Him; the church does not do that. There is neither the place of sons nor of union with the Head.

Question. What is the difference between "children" and "sons"?

Well, "children" puts them in the place of relationship, but "sons" is grown up. John speaks of children, Paul of sons. We have "sons" in John, where it ought to be "children," and "children" in Galatians iv. where it ought to be "sons." In 1 John ii. 12, 28, it is *all* Christians; in verse 13 it is *young* Christians. Here we get a Man in heaven sitting at the right hand of God. Consequent on that the Holy Ghost comes down; came down ten days after Christ ascended. Then you get the consciousness of being sons. You get all about Christ in the Old Testament, but no idea of union; it could not be then.

Question. Will the temple be set up in the millennium?

I believe it will.

The temple is never given as a figure of heavenly things; always the tabernacle. In the tabernacle the faces of the cherubim turned inward, and their wings stretched forth on high, covering the mercy-seat. It was the secret counsels of God. In the temple they stood looking down the temple, wing touching wing, in the centre, and reaching to the walls at each side. It was the administrative government of God.

Verse 15. "Every family." Before Abraham there was no family of faith. Abraham was the root of all the promises.

God had His throne between the cherubim. In the Babylonish captivity God had not His throne. Christ came as a king, and they would not have Him; that sets the whole thing aside.

The principle of Judaism was keeping up the partition; that of Christianity, breaking it down. The Syrophenician woman got through all dispensations to the heart of God, and all God's heart was at her disposal.

Chapter iii. 8. "Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery," not merely promises, but the mystery hid in God. The heavenly beings did not know it; it was hid in God. "Manifold wisdom"—a new thing come out; "our conversation is in heaven," our hearts ought to be there; all our living associations.

If I speak of sons, it is not union: it is *two*; but there is only *one Spirit*. We are justified, you are a son and I am a son, but it is individual, we are two; but if I speak of the "one Spirit," it is union.

"That ye faint not at my tribulation for you." There was not one place where it was not the Jews who raised the first persecution against Paul, so he says to the Gentiles, My persecution is "your glory."

Verse 14. This prayer is very instructive. Now I get the *Father* of the Lord Jesus Christ, a deeper thing than the *God*. (Chap. i.)

Verse 15. "Every family in heaven and earth." This expression is taken from Amos iii.: angels, principalities, the church, &c. He revealed Himself to the patriarchs as the Almighty God; to the Jews as Jehovah. In the millennium it will be as the Most High. We come in as heirs with Christ, and He is our Father. We belong to no dispensation.

He does not say here as in the prayer of chapter i., "that ye may know;" here it is internal; we *have* it. He is in us as life, but here it is another thing; that He may "dwell in our hearts by faith." (1 John iv. 16.) See what a difference that makes; it spiritualises the whole life. It is wonderful how far he goes here. In Romans v. we have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost; purely God's love. I

get it in its absolute purity, in the heart of God Himself. I had no part in what saved me except my sins. Christ is the centre of all God's purposes in glory, and I have Him in my heart. When I get Christ in me, I am at the centre.

Verse 18. Then I get, "May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, breadth, depth, height." What is that? Of *God's glory!* He brings me back to that centre, and I am at the very centre of glory in heaven! It is beautiful that he stops there.

Then he says: "That you may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Impossible to go beyond that! I may not be able to take it all in, but it has taken me all in. I cannot realise the thought of infinite space; consequently, I never can get out of it; I am lost in it; still I know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. We are creatures even in glory; "we *know* it," and "it *passeth* knowledge," goes together. There is nothing of God that is revealable that is not revealed. We may think of one part at one time, and of another at another time, but we have it all revealed. "Filled unto all the fulness of God."

Verse 20. "Unto Him . . . according to the power that worketh *in* us." He is to be glorified in the church. He is looking for a power working in us, and Christ being glorified in the church by that. People generally separate the last two

verses, but they go together ; it is according to the power that worketh in us, there will be glory to Him in the church by Christ Jesus.

(J. N. D.)

The Lord's ways are very wonderful, and He knows what we do not. His heart and His government, perfect in wisdom, are the rest for our hearts, and give a peace which no understanding of His ways could ever give. So in Philippians iv., Himself is our portion ; and precious as are all His ways, they are only means for our getting to know Himself and resting in the love which is beyond all the blessing which flows from it, and which finds its full expression in the cross.

“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,” He said to Abraham. It was not what He gave, but Himself, the giver. And it was this that Abraham had to learn, in order to become practically the “friend” it was God's intention to make him. Blessing given along the way was the occasion of exercising his heart, and leading him gradually to personal

acquaintance with the Blessor. But his heart was not to stop at the blessing; it was only when he was ready to give all up into God's hand, that he came to be truly resting in the **One from whom** all had been received, and who was leading him on to yet brighter blessing beyond. And so he was called "the friend of God."

W. J. L.

Works suited to Christ are as much ordained beforehand by God as He has ordained redemption and our place in Christ. Go and imitate God Himself: Ephesians v. 1. He sends us out from the place there to do as Christ did here.

(G. v. w.)

THE BREAD OF GOD.

JOHN VI. 47-71.

I HAVE it a little on my heart to seek to unfold, as God may enable me by His Spirit, the verses we have read in this chapter, which are more especially connected with the appropriation by the believer of the death of the Son of man. I need hardly say that this connects itself very intimately with the blessing of *eternal life*, into which the believer is brought.

I would first say a few words as to the general place in this Gospel of these two chapters, the fifth and sixth.

There is a certain development in the truth that runs all through the Gospels. There was more than one side in the Person of the blessed Lord, and we get this opened out by the four evangelists. In John v. Jesus is presented to us as the Son of God acting in divine sovereignty: "The Son quickeneth whom he will." And then again: "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." The great point of chapter v. is that the Lord Jesus exercises divine prerogative. *God* is the Judge, but all judgment is committed "unto the *Son*,

that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

But in chapter vi., what is brought before us is the form in which eternal life was presented to men; it is an *incarnate* Christ, the true bread from heaven, the Son of man, sealed by the Father, who gives His flesh for the life of the world. This is the great point that the Lord presses in this chapter.

The Jews claimed to be the people of privilege. They say: "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat." But the Lord answers: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." An *incarnate* Christ was the form in which God presented His Son to man to be received; and a humbled Christ is food for the believer. He adds, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." If the Jews had really discerned the grace of His humiliation, that He really was the Son of God, they would have had eternal life, but they must have gone on to appropriate His death. I have no doubt this would have been the case, but it is not my subject to-night. I wish rather to look

at the absolute necessity for the death of Christ for us, and our appropriation thereof.

Most of you will remember these words in the first epistle of John : " There are three that bear record ; the Spirit, and the water, and the blood : and these three agree in one." They all bear witness to the fact that God has given to us eternal life. But they also bear *another* witness, and that is, that if we have eternal life, it is not in Adam ; it is not in ourselves ; it is *in Christ*. And that, I believe, is the teaching of the epistle ; and this is how the epistle connects itself with the passage that I have read. It was when the Lord was dead that the blood and the water flowed forth ; and the Spirit was not given until He had gone back to the Father. So that I do not get one of these witnesses until death has come in.

I question in my own mind whether we realise the solemnity of the fact that death has come in ; and that, not death in ourselves, for, if it had been, we should have been for ever lost ; but it is the death of *Christ*.

But I wish to say a few words more about these three witnesses. I believe that you will find that the whole of John's first epistle ranges itself under these three heads : The consequences of the water ; the consequences of the blood ; and the consequences of the Spirit.

The first two chapters are rather the result of

the blood, for that is what gives us title to be with Him. God Himself is always light; but the witness about God to Israel was that "Moses drew near unto *the thick darkness where God was.*" Now the witness is: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light." God has come out in light, and Christianity has brought us into the light in which He is. It is not conditional. God has brought us "out of darkness into his marvellous light." This is not attainment; it is the privilege of every believer. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and gives us the privilege to walk in the light as He is.

In the third chapter the question is the nature; that which is the product in the believer of the word. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures," as the apostle James says, and Peter: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." So here we get that we are the children of God, and that "He that practises righteousness is righteous, even as *he* is righteous." It is a righteous nature, which has its manifestation also in love; love that enables us to "lay down our lives for the brethren." It is a wonderful thing! We may not enter into it, but still there it is plain in Scripture. And men may not be able to see it in

us, it may be obscured, but still it is there ; it is the same nature as in God Himself, it is divine.

Then comes the third witness : the Spirit. This is the result ; it follows on the water and the blood. An entirely new thing has been brought in, a new creation, and this is accompanied by the Spirit. The consequences of the presence of the Spirit are brought out in the fourth chapter.

The first is intelligence. The apostle says " We know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." We know it because God has given to us of His Spirit, and He does not take away His Spirit. We continue in God and He in us. Besides this, the Spirit is here for testimony ; He witnesses that " The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Both these are the result of the presence of the Spirit of God in the believer. I have said thus much in preface, and would now add a few words on the passage I read.

The Jews were stumbled at once when the Lord spoke of giving His flesh to eat, and I do not wonder at it. " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." This was the test. You may meet people who pretend to have life towards God, but if they do not know what it is to have eaten " the flesh of the Son of man, and to have drunk his blood," there is no life in them. I need hardly say how

much Socinianism there is in the present day. The death of Christ is slighted as to the solemn judgment of man's state effected in it. Now the Lord puts it as a test for the state of souls. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." If you have not part in *death*, you have not part in *life*.

There are three things brought out in our chapter about the Son. First, He has become incarnate. Second, He dies. Third, He goes up to heaven again, where He was before. Now the Lord was talking here to people who were setting up religious pretensions; "*Except ye eat,*" you are clean outside the whole thing. You have no part in life if not in death. The old state is death, as children of Adam; the new is life in Christ, but through death. As to the Christian, it does not say that he has life in *him*, but life in *Christ*.

The next verse is not so much a test, as it is a *proof*. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." His death is the food of life. The eating in this verse is, I judge, an habitual thing. It is not a thing that is done once for all. And I ask, Is it not a privilege to feed on the death of Christ? I do not mean at the Lord's table on the first day of the week, I mean as the habit of our souls every day of our lives. It is an individual thing. Has not God

brought in the death of Christ upon everything? From the cedar wood to the hyssop? I do not say it is our *only* food; for we have also the humbled Christ, the manna; but we do feed on the death of Christ.

And while contemplating, and a blessed contemplation it is, the death of Christ, in His perfect love to the Father, and in His triumph over evil, we have a part in what is *eternal*, in what never began and will never end. This part in life with Christ is what we are brought into; and when the time for display comes, He will raise us up. If, as having life, we delight to meditate on the death of Christ, Christ will raise us up at the last day! What a blessed thing! It is a present association with Christ, and the display and the glory are at the last day.

In the next verse we have a further statement. If we eat His flesh and drink His blood, He continues in us and we in Him. We have an eternal part in Christ; and, if I may use the expression reverently, He has in us. A person may in a sense have a part for a time in Christ, and then go away; but it is not this; here it is "continue" as we get it in the epistle; it is a present and continuous "eateth and drinketh."

But more than this. It indicates a condition of dependence, for the life is only in Him; and the word "continue" implies dependence. I have eternal life up there in Christ, and Christ is in

me down here before the world. Christ did not present *Himself* to the world, but the *Father*; and so with us. We continue in Christ, and Christ in us. And if you want to know what a Christian is, I can say it is *Christ*. People sometimes talk and think much of proprieties. Thank God, we have done with proprieties. And what tends to distinguish us—that which ought to characterise a Christian down here—is *Christ*, and that is what I seek. God does not value anything else but Christ in His people. It is what is before the mind that forms the person. If it is Christ that is before you, Christ will come out in your life and ways.

There is one more clause: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." I can only say as to this verse that I dare not expatiate on it. Indeed what could I say about it? I little understand what it is for Christ to live on account of the Father. All that I can say is that the very same character of life as that of the Son is the life of the believer, and that inseparable connection with Christ is ours. In this passage there is not the thought of the body. It is *life* only that is before us. But life is essential to the truth of the body, and it is in this way that John is necessary to Paul; John gives us the life; Paul gives us the life in one body. (Col. iii.) We cannot well appreciate church

truth if we do not enter into what John teaches as to the life.

And then we have this closing expression: "This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." The Lord reverts to what He had been saying in the previous part of the chapter. He knew very well that He was going on to death, and He insists, on the way to it, that He was "the living bread which came down from heaven, that a man might eat thereof, and not die." I do not doubt at all, if there had been a single one of those poor Jews listening to Him that could, in faith, have seen the Son of God through the humble exterior of the Lord Jesus Christ, that he would have had the blessing, in anticipation, though, as I have said, he must needs go on to the death. It is a great thing to get into God's thoughts. The pretensions of man in the present day only move one's contempt and sorrow; but that a Man could stand upon earth and say: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven *he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*" is marvellous! Death has now come in, and life is the result. Is not that worthy of God! The death of Christ is presented to man as the way of life, and feeding on it is a proof to the believer that he has got eternal life. Take the

simplest soul that you can, but find it delighting in meditating on the death of Christ, and it is to me a proof that it has eternal life.

The seed of the life is in Christ, and it is a dependent life, as we have been seeing: "He that eateth me, even he shall *live by me*." If you could take away Christ, you could take away the life of the believer. But you cannot take away Christ, for Christ is God.

It is a great thing for our souls if God, by His Spirit, establishes us in the understanding of this truth, and gives us to realise what a marvellous thing it is to be in the hands of Christ! To know that we are going to be the subjects of His mighty power, and that He is going to raise us up at the last day.

(F. E. R.)

THE word *sin* ought to be to me identical with *the sufferings of Christ*. I cannot indulge old propensities, for Christ died, and I am ransomed.

(G. V. W.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER I.

THE Book of Joshua gives us, in type, the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. The journey across the desert had come to an end, and the children of Israel had now to cross the Jordan led by a new guide, and to take possession of the land of promise, driving out the enemies who dwelt there. It is the same for us. The heavenly places are our Canaan, into which we enter by the power of the Spirit of God, who unites us to an ascended Christ, and seats us together in Him in the glory, so that thus we enjoy anticipatively this glory which He has acquired for Himself, into which He will introduce us, and which we shall share, ere long, with Him.

But, meanwhile, we have to fight the fight of faith against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, in order to appropriate every inch of ground which God has given us to inherit. The difference between the type and the reality is, that the wilderness journey was over for Israel before they entered Canaan, whilst for us the desert and Canaan exist together, but this only

increases the blessing. If the wilderness teaches us that we still need to be humbled and proved to know what is in our hearts, it is there that, in answer to our infirmities, we experience the preciousness of divine resources in the midst of this "dry and thirsty land where no water is:" God opening His hand to feed us with manna, to refresh us with water from the rock, and to make us taste the inexhaustible resources of His grace, for His people have "lacked nothing." "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years." (Deut. viii. 4.) Moreover, we find ourselves at the same time, if not at the same moment, in the green pastures and still waters of a rich country whose first-fruits we taste; we can sit at peace at the table spread on the other side of Jordan, and enjoy its food, *delighting ourselves in a heavenly Christ seated in the glory at God's right hand.*

THE LEADER.

At the moment when this new stage of Israel's history begins, Joshua is called to take the leadership of the people. This remarkable man appears for the first time in Exodus xvii., at the time of the war against Amalek, and this gives us the key to his typical character. Whilst Moses, type here of divine authority intimately associated with the heavenly priesthood and the righteousness of Christ, stands on the top of the hill during

the combat, there is a man down in the plain associated with the people whom he leads, a man "in whom is the spirit," as the Lord said to Moses, (Num. xxvii. 18) and who conducts the battle of the Lord. This Joshua is Christ, but Christ in us, or amongst us down here, in the power of the Holy Ghost. Moses, as their leader, had been inseparable from Israel in the desert, and so it will be with Joshua as leader of the people in Canaan. It is said of this last: a man "which may go out before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient." (Num. xxvii. 17, 20.)

THE LAND AND ITS BOUNDARIES.

In verse 2, the Jordan is mentioned, a barrier between the people and the promised land which they must cross under the guidance of Joshua to enter Canaan. Their inheritance was a pure gift of the grace of God: "The land which I do *give* to the children of Israel." They were entitled to it by God, but it was a question for the people not only of possession, but of *entering into possession*: "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." (Ver. 3.) So it is with us spiritually: we have all

these things, but we cannot enter into them, except as having passed through death with Christ, and entering by the power of His Spirit where He is. In short, it is as we occupy ourselves with these things, and enter into them diligently and personally, that we lay hold of each one of our blessings, and prove their heavenly reality. In one word, the Christian must himself appropriate them by faith in order to enjoy them; otherwise he would be like a poor king, ill and living abroad, who had never travelled in his own kingdom.

In verse 5, we find another important feature which characterises the land; the enemy is there, obstacles are there, wherever we put our foot an adversary arises. We see here clearly, as has often been remarked, that Canaan is not heaven in the sense in which we shall reach it by actual physical death, but heaven in which the enemy is found, heaven the scene of present warfare for the Christian. But, precious promise: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee," said the Lord to Joshua, "all the days of thy life;" that is to say, until he should have established the people definitely in possession of the land. And what security there was for the people in this promise. Scarcely, says God, will you have encountered the enemy on your path, ere he shall be dispersed. The people might have shouted: Victory! Satan cannot stand before

us!—Poor Israel, you will soon see it before Ai; you are but a toy in the hands of Satan, you have no strength to resist him, but the power is in Christ. “There shall not any man be able to stand before *thee*,” said the Lord to Joshua; whilst the promise to the people was (ver. 3): “I have given unto *you*.”

We may notice another point in verse 4. God gives them an exact description of the boundaries of Canaan. What are they? In their full extent they were never reached by the people, but will be given to them in millennial glory. Likewise for us, the heavenly places are our present conquest wherever we place our foot, but shall we ever measure the extent of our inheritance? Now we “know in part,” but the day is at hand when that which is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall be done away; “then shall I know even as also I am known.”

The boundaries of the land were a great *desert*, a great *mountain*, a great *river*, and a great *sea*. That is what was to be found outside this fertile country, that on which the people could not or ought not to tread. Do we not find here the world with all its moral characteristics: its aridity, its power, its prosperity, and its agitation? As to its aridity, Israel had gone through it, only to prove that it had no resource for them, and that the bread from heaven alone could feed them in these solitudes. Such, be-

loved, is the character of the things which are *not* ours. But Canaan—heaven, is ours; Canaan with its warfare no doubt, but its victories; Canaan with the peaceful enjoyment of infinite possessions, resuming themselves in, and concentrating themselves around the person of a risen Christ seated in the glory.

THE MORAL QUALIFICATIONS REQUISITE FOR
ENTRANCE INTO CANAAN.

In verse 6, we find spiritual energy, what the apostle Peter calls “virtue.” Faith led them to tread everywhere with the sole of their feet; “virtue” was to be added to faith; but it is worthy of note that this energy is not to be found in us; for the people it is found *in Joshua*; it is *in Christ* for us. “Be strong and of good courage, for *thou* shalt cause this people to inherit the land which I swear unto their fathers to give them.” “Blessed is the man whose strength is *in Thee* . . . they go from strength to strength.” This principle is of the utmost importance. How many Christians there are who seek to discover strength *in themselves*, to feel themselves strong for the combat! Their quest, if it does not lead to discouragement, ends in what certainly is not worth more, self-satisfaction. Power is not there, it is in Christ, but in Christ for us. And why is it given to us? Is it to render us great in our own eyes, or to puff

us up? Far from it; but to lead us into the path of *obedience*. (Ver. 7.) It is little children who learn to obey. Strength makes us small; it makes an atom of man, in order that the power of Christ may be exalted.

We find a beautiful example of this truth in Judges vi. "The angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon and said unto him: the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." These two things are closely united: strength was his in the Lord Himself. "Go in this thy might," said the Lord looking upon him; and he is immediately seized with the sense of his own nothingness: his family was the poorest in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house. And the Lord said unto him: "Surely I will be with thee."

Obedience is always governed by the word of God. God gives strength to Joshua, in order, He says, "*that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law of Moses.*" But besides the spiritual energy necessary to obey, there must be something more. He adds in verse 8: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, *that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.*" There must then be, besides divine energy, *diligent care* to appropriate the thoughts of God. He says: *meditate therein, in order to obey.* Is that our aim when we

study the word of God? Often we like to read for the sake of instruction, which is of itself a good thing; at other times, so as to be able to impart to others, also an excellent thing in its place; but, let me say again, do we habitually read it *for the purpose* of diligently obeying? If it were so, how it would change the whole current of Christians' lives!

He adds: "Meditate therein day and night." There are some Christians who read a chapter (alas, a verse perhaps!) every morning as a sort of amulet to preserve them throughout the day. Is that meditating day and night on the word of God? What about our occupations? do you say? Well, let me ask you in return: In the midst of your occupations, is it the word given by God which nourishes you—that word given for your soul's enjoyment, and to guide you in the path of Christ? That is the way to "have good success in our ways and to prosper."

In verse 9 we find a further principle: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage." What power the assurance of God's mind gives! All indecision as to the path, all terror, all fear of the enemy disappear. Satan cannot harm us; has not God commanded us? Such then are the principles which should govern the heart that would enjoy heavenly things and fight the battles of the Lord. It is blessed to see them stated quite at the beginning of this

book, before Israel has taken a single step, in such a way as to place him in possession of well-furnished weapons wherewith to obtain the victory.

THOSE WHO ENTER CANAAN.

After shewing us the Leader, the land, and the moral qualifications necessary for entrance therein, the word of God speaks to us (vers. 10-18) of those who are called to enter in. They comprise the people, and *also* the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. These last do not refuse, as the previous generation had done, to enter, when the spies caused their hearts to melt. On the contrary, they associate themselves with their brethren, and are in the first rank of combatants, but not to take possession of the land. Their portion is on the other side of Jordan. It was their circumstances which led them to choose it: they had much cattle: "the place was a place for cattle," adapted to their circumstances. (Num. xxxii. 1.)

It is the same with numbers of Christians; indeed, one might say that to-day it is rather the nine tribes and a half who have chosen their dwelling on the other side of Jordan. The main point in the Christian life of believers is the circumstances of this life, the every-day needs, abundance or want, enclosures for their cattle, or cities for their families. (Num.

xxxii. 16.) Moreover, these Christians are not, properly speaking, lacking in faith: on the contrary they experience that the Lord can enter in grace into all their circumstances, adapting Himself to them, and that He does so, He who came down to bring divine blessing to this earth. Theirs is not a *worldly* Christianity, but an *earthly* one. Israel were a type of worldly Christianity, when they refused to go up to the mountain of the Amorites. "Is it not better for us to return to Egypt? And they said one to another; let us make us a captain and let us return to Egypt." (Num. xiv. 3, 4.) Also their carcasses fell in the wilderness. The two and a half tribes are the type of those who lower Christianity to a life of faith for the earthly circumstances they traverse, making their life to consist in these things. "They had much cattle." Moses is at first indignant, but he afterwards bears with them, seeing that although their faith was weak, still it was faith, and that these earthly links did not separate them from their brethren.

Beloved, this tendency to lower Christianity vaunts itself on every hand as a tenet in the present day. With much pretension to power, little is known beyond a Christ in whom to trust for His providential care, and in the details, great or small, of daily life. Christ is known as a Shepherd: "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me;"

but even in this way, how feebly the extent of His resources is appreciated! If He leads us through this world, it is not here that He gives us rest. The green pastures and the still waters are not the fields, nor the sheepfolds, nor the cities of Gilead, but the rich pastures of the land of Canaan.

It is blessed to confide in Him for everything, and God forbid that we should seek to diminish in the saints aught of this confidence; but let us know something of the joy of entrance even now there where a glorified Christ is to be found, of being attracted outside this world, drawn away from this scene, to be introduced, dead and risen with Him, into a heavenly Canaan. There, the motive for our walk will no longer be "much cattle;" it will not be a question of arranging our life more or less faithfully according to what we possess; but, having left all behind, self, and the affairs of this life, in the bottom of the river of death, we have now to fight to take possession of all our privileges in Christ, realising them by faith, and enjoying them in the power of the Spirit.

Notice, too, that whether they will or not, all cross the Jordan. Our brethren fight with us against infidelity, and against the power of Satan, who displays his tactics in the world; but death and resurrection is for them only a *fact* (it is so for all), not a *realisation*. The soul must realise it in order to take possession of the land.

CHAPTER II.

RAHAB.

IN the second part of chapter i. we have seen two classes of persons called to cross the Jordan to enter the land of promise, type of heavenly places: the people and the two and a half tribes whose moral character is not on a par with their vocation, but who take part in the combat to ensure to Israel the possession of their inheritance. In Rahab we find a third class of persons; the Gentiles who share by faith the enjoyment of the promises in common with God's ancient people. Rahab the harlot was a Gentile; she belonged by birth to that large company of which the Epistle to the Ephesians speaks; "Ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." But more than this, Rahab was a degraded person amongst the Gentiles themselves.

But the word of God comes to her: "We have heard," she said to the spies. It was a word which assured grace and deliverance to some, and judgment to others. Faith in this word

places her immediately, as to her conscience, under the weight of the judgment. "As soon as we heard it *our* hearts did melt." (Ver. 11.) Like her people she is filled with fear; but whilst they had lost all courage, for her this very fear is the beginning of wisdom, for it is *the fear of the Lord*, a fear which makes her look to God, and immediately she acquires the certainty ("I know," ver. 9) that this God is a God of grace for His people. She seeks her resources in this God who is the resource of His own. Faith is not mere human imagination which likes to deceive itself, and which sees things in whatever light it pleases. It is not the human mind building its conclusions on possibilities or probabilities; she says simply, "I know," because she has heard what the Lord has done.

Rahab looks to God. She is threatened with judgment, but she sees that God takes interest in His people. She says to herself: If God is to be gracious to me, I must be with His people. So when the spies appear, Rahab by faith receives them "with peace" (Heb. xi. 31); and whilst the world seeks them everywhere, so as to rid itself of the testimony of God, she hides them safely, and values them as being the means which God would use to preserve her from future judgment. Her deliverance depends on their preservation. Not only does she believe in Israel's God, but, as some one has

said, "she identifies herself with the Israel of God," and her faith receives an immediate answer. She does not need to acquire the certainty by seeing Jericho surrounded by the army of Jehovah. That would not be faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things *not* seen. Notice how perfect and worthy of God is the answer. She had said: "Swear to me . . . that ye will deliver our lives from death;" and the messengers reply: "Our life for yours." Her faith finds in others (we, in Christ) the guarantee by substitution that death would not reach her.

This is not all. A scarlet thread, unpretending type of the death of One who could have said: "I am a worm and no man," suffices her as token and safeguard. Just as the blood of the paschal lamb on the lintels of the doorposts averted the judgment of the destroying angel, so the scarlet thread suspended from the window of a house which was "upon the town wall," was to preserve the house and all in it when the wall itself should fall down at the noise of the trumpets of Jehovah.

One more point: they are living witnesses who are the guarantees that death is Rahab's safeguard. In the same way for us; Christ is the living witness before God of the perfect efficacy, in redemption, of His blood shed for us on the cross. "Neither by the blood of goats and

calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. ix. 12.)

Dear reader, how beautiful is Rahab's faith! She does not wait, as recommended by the spies, until the people "be come into the land" (ver. 18) to bind the scarlet line in the window; they are scarcely gone when she hastens to put it there, testifying thus to what she has believed; her faith does not linger, it speaks henceforth loudly; she proclaims from her window Christ and the efficacy of His work to save the most miserable of sinners.

Finally, Rahab is not only an example of faith, but also of works. "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way." (James ii. 25.) Works must follow faith. There is such a thing as dead works which are not the product of faith; and there is a dead faith which does not produce works; but Rahab's works can only be the fruit of faith. An Abraham to offer up his son as a burnt offering, a Rahab to betray her country, or a Mary to break a costly box of alabaster to waste her all, an odour of great price—human wisdom condemns, and the authors of such deeds are blamed or punished by the world; but what renders them approved of God, is the faith which is the motive spring, and faith which sacrifices

all for God, and which surrenders all for His people.

Rahab finds her recompense : a place of honour is reserved for her with those who, amongst God's earthly people, form the lineage of Messiah. (Matt. i. 5.)

CHAPTER III.

THE JORDAN.

THE two preliminary chapters with which we have been occupied bring us now to the main point of the narrative. Israel had to cross the Jordan to enter Canaan, and what is the Jordan?

From Egypt up to this, the deliverance of the people is characterised by two great events ; the Passover and the Red Sea ; and in order to understand the third great event, that is the crossing of the Jordan, it is well to seize the meaning of the first two. All three are types of the cross of Christ ; but its aspects are so rich, so various, so infinite that we need all these, and many others, in order to comprehend its depth and extent.

The Passover shews us the cross of Christ as a shelter from the judgment of God. "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." (Ex. xii. 12.) Now Israel themselves could only be sheltered

by the blood of the paschal lamb placed between the people as sinners and God as a Judge who was *against them*. This is expiation. The blood stays God, so to speak ; keeps Him outside, and places us in safety inside. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Only let us not forget that it is the *love* of God which provides the sacrifice capable of meeting His own *judgment*. Love thus spares the people who could not of themselves escape judgment any more than the Egyptians.

But we learn more than this in the Passover. The blood was that of the paschal lamb wholly roast with fire ; a type of Christ who endured in the fullest way both externally and in the depths of His whole being the judgment of God for us and in our stead. Whilst under the shelter of the blood, the Israelites, and above all the believers amongst them, found food for their hearts in the thought of Him in death, yet with a deep feeling of the bitterness of sin, as typified by the bitter herbs, but of a sin completely atoned for.

At the Red Sea we find a second aspect of the cross of Christ, which is *redemption* : "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth thy people which thou hast redeemed." (Ex. xv. 13.) Now if God delivers and redeems us, He is *for us* instead of being *against us* ; indeed, it says : "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."

(Ex. xiv. 14.) The Passover stayed God Himself as a Judge, and set Israel in safety; at the Red Sea God intervenes as a Saviour (xv. 2) in favour of His people, who have nothing to do but to look on at their deliverance: "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." (Ex. xiv. 13.) In redemption God, so to speak, acts as if the enemies which were against us, and which we were quite powerless to overcome, were against Him.

What a terrible and critical situation was that of the people of God at this solemn moment! The enemy seeking to recover possession of his prey, pursuing hard after Israel and driving them to an extremity towards an impassable sea. It is the same with sinners. The power of Satan hurries them on towards death, and death is *the judgment of God*: "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after death the judgment." Now the soul must have to do with this last directly and personally, must come into immediate contact with death which is the expression of it. There is no means of escaping. The people were weaponless and resourceless in presence of the enemy and the power of death, and it is in this extremity that God intervenes. The rod of judicial authority is stretched out, not over Israel, but in their favour, over the sea, and death becomes, instead of a gulf, a pathway for the people. They can cross it dry-shod. What a new pathway it was, and what a solemn hour for

Israel as a nation, when they passed between these liquid walls formed on their right hand and on their left by the action of "the east wind," between these floods, which instead of engulfing them proved their rampart! The solemnity of the scene remained; the horror of it was for ever obliterated.

We find in this scene a type of death and judgment borne by another, and for us the Lord presents Himself in it: "For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me." "The waters compassed me about even to the soul." (Jonah ii. 3, 5.) Christ endured to the full the horror of death, and felt it alone in the infinite depths of His holy soul.

But the people cross the sea dry-shod. Judgment finds nothing in them, because it has spent itself in death, and for us on the person of Christ on the cross.

They come out on the other side safe and sound, and here we have a type not merely of the death of Christ, but also of His resurrection for us.

This is what may be learnt from the Red Sea. The army of the adversary is overthrown, and finds its grave where we have found a pathway. All fear is over; we can stand in peace on the opposite shore in the power of a resurrection-life which has passed through death.

It is by faith that we share in this blessing: "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned." (Heb. xi. 29.) Whilst faith passes through it, the world, which seeks *of itself* to meet death and judgment, will be engulfed.

Having now considered the meaning of the Red Sea, typical of the death and resurrection of Christ for us, let us ask ourselves, What is the extent of the deliverance therein operated in favour of the people?

It is *salvation*, a simple word in itself, but one of unparalleled importance for our hearts. Salvation has its negative and its positive side. The first comprises the destruction of the enemy, of his power and all its consequences. Grace, in the person of Christ, has taken our place in death under all this: "It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation." Thus, Satan's power, the world, sin, death, wrath, and judgment, are overcome and destroyed for faith in the cross of Christ.

But there is also a *positive* blessing to be found in this blessed work. "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength unto *thy holy habitation*." (Ex. xv. 13.) "I bare you on eagles' wings, and *brought you* unto myself." (Ex. xix. 4.) "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might *bring us*

to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) "For through him we both have access by one Spirit *unto the Father.*" (Eph. ii. 18.)

Infinite blessing! The people have not only *escaped*, but they have *arrived* by a new and living way which has brought them to the end, into the presence of God Himself, a God whom we know as the *Father*. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 John iii. 1.) Let us celebrate with Israel, only in a higher key, the song of deliverance! No more separation, or distance; the port is gained, which is God Himself, He whom, by the Spirit, we call "Abba, Father."

What share did Israel take in all this work? Absolutely none. Salvation is brought to us by the free grace of God who exacts nothing, and who does not claim His rights over us, but who finds His satisfaction in being a sovereign and an eternal Giver.

(H. L. R.)

(*To be continued.*)

CALEB AND PAUL.

JOSHUA xiv. 6-13; PHILIPPIANS I. 20-26.

THE thought in my mind was just to bring before us some examples of faith to encourage us to-day in a special pathway; for the day we live in is surely a special day—one in which we are called to maintain a special truth given to us by God. And to do this we need the special faith of a Caleb or a Paul.

Now it is difficulty that calls out faith; but faith fears no difficulty, for to faith all is possible, and to God all is possible.

When the twelve spies went through the land to search it out, Caleb and Joshua brought back a *divine* report as to it; the others brought back only a *human* one. They forgot that which it was God's purpose to give to His people, and so they said: "The cities are walled and very great It is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof, and all the people that we saw are men of a great stature." But the others say: "Let us go up at once and possess it: for we are well able to overcome it." They see it with Jehovah's eyes, and there is no difficulty with Him. The

people listened to that which was false, as they still do to-day. This was the tenth time that Israel had failed, and then it was that Jehovah judged His people and said they should not go into the land.

It is very beautiful in Caleb the way in which he comes to Joshua, and claims that which Moses had promised him. All through that forty years of wandering in the wilderness that promise had sustained these two men. It was no little thing to them to have to tread that wilderness during forty long years because of the unbelief of the people. But at the end of it there was no diminution in the strength of Caleb. He could say: "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fenced: if so be that the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said." Here was faith that had God before it, faith that saw everything in connection with God and valued it as His gift.

And to-day, what is it that sustains us in the path? "This world is a wilderness wide," as we have been singing; it is not our sphere; we have to pass through it and *refuse* it. But we read

the people's hearts turned back to Egypt, and it is often so with God's people. They are often only separated from the world by circumstances, whilst all the time their *hearts* are in it. They are not satisfied. It is not with them that they are not saved, but it is that Christ is not known, and proved, and loved.

The cross tells me that all down here is closed to faith, while Christ is made the object, the prize, and the goal of the soul. This is what we get in Philippians iii. Here we find a soul, a heart, completely absorbed with its object. It is Christ who loved me and gave Himself for me, that occupies Paul's vision at the beginning of his course; and we find him the same at the close. Though all has come to ruin, yet nothing moves him. Caleb can say he has "wholly followed the Lord his God;" Paul can say, "This one thing I do." Can you and I speak thus? Alas, alas, alas!

Paul had no other thought but Christ from the beginning, when He called him, to the end of his course. And this is just what we need in the present day. The Epistle to the Philippians just says to us, Go on, go on! Look at the divided mind in Paul. He says, "I am ready to depart;" but at the same moment: "To abide in the flesh is more needful for you . . . What I shall choose I wot not." His had been a life given up to the things of Christ, and now he is ready to be

offered for Him. We have not the power of this. How far do we know what it is to be martyrs, witnesses? We are not called to the stake; we are not up to it perhaps. But a martyr is simply a witness, and following Christ and refusing the world *is* martyrdom. The one who *loves* Christ is prepared to *die* for Christ. "I have a desire to depart." How he can speak of it! It was the will of Christ. He had made others suffer once for His name's sake, and now he is ready to die himself. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." How precious that is! There is a crown laid up for Paul which the *righteous* judge will give him. The very proof of His righteousness will be giving Paul that crown.

Thus Caleb walked in the sense of the approval of God, and Paul also in his day. And I would ask what have we if we have not intimacy with Christ? Where are we if we are not where they were? Just *nowhere*! Hence come murmurings and complainings. Are we appreciating the One who at such a cost has given us such a portion? What is before Christ as a Man? Does He not value all that has been given Him by God? All that He has acquired by infinite sacrifice? And there we shall be with Him, and like Him; there we shall be to His eternal praise.

The Lord give us to be in the power of all the truth that He has given to us in these last days, to be in the communion of it, the life, the reality, the power, the knowledge of it; that all that He has given to us may be taken possession of by us, to His everlasting praise and our glory.

(H. J. J.)

His springs are our springs; we have no false prop, no stay of nature to sustain us; we have an arm which may be leaned on. He knew in the days of His service here that His Father's arm was enough for Him. And He is enough for us, were the path ten thousand times more sad and difficult.

I have known, if others do not, what it is to be crucified, dead, buried, quickened and raised with Him. Have you tasted it? Have you known it well?

(G. V. W.)

COLOSSIANS I.

WHAT characterises this Epistle is that we are looked at as risen ; dead and risen, but not yet seated in heavenly places ; but the Holy Ghost revealing our places in heaven, but walking as risen men in the world, looking for heaven.

In different Epistles we get various aspects of the Christian. In Ephesians we are seated in the heavenlies. Romans, alive in this world. Here (Colossians), we are risen ; not in glory. We get here, more fully than elsewhere, life unfolded : "Your life is hid with Christ in God." Then you should walk according to that. He puts us to run the race. People get confused by connecting these "ifs" with redemption. "Christ in you the hope of glory ;" in you Gentiles ; an entirely new thought ; a thing never heard of before. You get that side of the mystery ; not Christ come in glory to take up His people, but Christ in *you*, the *hope* of glory.

Verse 8 is the only place the Spirit is named in this Epistle.

Verse 10. "That ye might walk worthy," &c. He puts the walk first ; not merely avoiding wickedness ; a natural man might do that ; but

“filled with the knowledge of his will.” Christ left traces of His path in the wilderness. In the ordering of Israel the tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, and they were to march in the same kind of order as they encamped, but when they wanted to find a way through the wilderness, the ark went before them; it was grace. It is remarkable there is no direction as to the walk, but “filled with the knowledge of his will.” Are you that? How often we do not know if we are right, even when we desire it. *Seeing* the path through the wilderness tests the state. The vulture’s eye hath not seen it.

If we are to walk worthy of the Lord, we must be filled with the knowledge of His will. Men ought to read Christ in you as distinctly as the ten commandments on the tables of stone. This is the apostle’s comparison, not mine. We shall be perfectly like Christ in glory, and the eye is directed to that now. He says, as it were, I am going away, and I cannot be glorified in my own person down here, but I should be in you. You are called to walk worthy of the Lord.

The first thing that struck me, when I began to think at all seriously, was that Christ never did anything for Himself; it ought to govern our hearts, our motives, everything. He was never weary of doing good. As a man He sat weary at the well, yet ready to speak to a poor woman. He had come down so low as to be dependent on

her for a drink of water. We should walk here having Christ before the heart, governing us, as the only motive. He was at all times, and in every case, governed by divine principles; sensible to everything around Him, but never governed by what was around Him; governed always by what was divine. We should always be governed by Him. He was at all times the expression of divine perfections.

“Christ is all and in all;” not all in all; that is never said of Christ. God is “all in all.” Our calling is to walk worthy of the Lord; we are in that place epistles of Christ. I am called to walk through this world to express Christ. There are three ways in which we are told to walk worthy: of God, of the Lord, and of the vocation. “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” It is the spiritual state that discerns what is worthy of the Lord.

Verse 11. “Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power.” You would expect it was to do something great. No; to be *patient*. There is no will when I am patient. You will find where you fail through the day it is patience has failed. We get wisdom to shew what the path is; strength to walk in it; not strength to overcome, but strength to endure. We do not read, resist the devil and you will overcome him,

but "resist, and he will flee from you." He knows he has met Christ, for flesh would not resist him.

Verse 12. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Now he comes to what set him in the path. I am fit for heaven—made meet. I cannot look up to God without having the consciousness, I am fit to be there in light. An exercised heart looks at Christ. The thief was fit to go to heaven. He confessed the Lord when the disciples were afraid to do it. He says "Lord," and cared for nothing, though he was in agony, but "Lord, remember me;" and it is an ugly place to be remembered on a gibbet.

Do you believe that Christ by His work has made you fit? I do not ask have you accepted it. *God has.* He gave His Son in love, and accepted Him in righteousness, and the thing that gives me peace is what God thinks of it. We are delivered from Satan's power; resist him and he will flee from you; Christ has broken his power. I am delivered from the power of darkness, but that did not content God; He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. We have got a positive place—the kingdom of the Son of His love; not of light, though it is that. God has two special names—light and love; and I get the love as well as the light. He is not

content to say it is in light, but it is love too. Then he speaks of the fulness of Christ's character, but I cannot go into it all.

Verse 16. I get blessed revelations brought close down to me. You must not suppose that we do not know Him because He is not present, for we know Him a great deal better, because we have the Spirit. I am not a stranger to God; I know Him, and as my Father. You cannot get further than the Father; if you get that you get everything. I have met God, I know what He is, and He is all love to me. We have the real revelation of God to our souls.

See Him in John iv. Had He a hard word for the poor Samaritan woman? No; He says: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." I have got it. He is all love to me. It makes me feel what a poor creature I am, these blessed revelations.

1 John iv. 16: "God dwelleth in him and he in God." We have the consciousness that He dwells in us. When I make my abode with the Father and the Son up there, they will make their abode with me down here. One has a consciousness that He is with us, in us. He goes on revealing Himself to us.

The time is coming when Christ will take to Himself His great power; then I shall get glory.

His first coming did not bring the world into order ; at His second coming everything will be brought into order in earth and heaven. Look at the earth now ; oppressions, wars, &c. ; that was how Christ found the world, and He was a Man of sorrows in it. In heaven we read the angels were cast out, and we never hear of them there again. Do you think Christ will allow such things ? Not for a moment. He *will* reconcile all things, but *you hath* He reconciled. It is never said, God is reconciled to us. God's love was the spring of it all. I joy in God, instead of hiding myself from Him like Adam. You are brought now to enjoy His love. "Herein is love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment."

I cannot realise this wonderful love of God without loving Him. It is the sense of its mother's love that makes the child obedient. I *am* reconciled ; I *am* fit to be in the light. There is no "if" in what has gone before. "Perfect love" accomplished all : "by one offering perfected for ever." The word "for ever" means uninterruptedly ; the "if" never comes in as to redemption. The thief goes straight to heaven.

In the wilderness we are tested. You must set out for Caanan, or you will not get there. We have the journey to take where the dangers are, and thus we are thrown on the faithfulness of God to keep us, and that is dependence. The danger is

real, but the care is faithful; it is constant dependence; He has to keep us every moment. "No man shall pluck them out of my hand," but why does he say so if there is no danger? Satan would like to do it. "Pluck," is the same word as "catcheth:" the wolf catcheth the sheep. In 1 Corinthians i. 8, we have: "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then he begins and blames them for every single thing as to their walk. They had more gift than grace—these poor Corinthians.

Christ is in heaven because my sins are gone, but when I come to my path, there is not an instant that I am not dependent on His faithfulness; every instant of every day I need to be in dependence on Him. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous." God had been considering Job; it is God who directs Satan's attention to Job, but He forces Satan to own that Job was no hypocrite. He withdraweth not his eyes for one instant. He has a constant unceasing care over us every moment. It is not a question of my walk, but of the unchanging faithfulness of the living Lord. He never takes His eye off us. If mine are always on Him, He will guide me with His eye. "As he is, so are we in this world." Is it presumption for us to believe what God says, though it is most wonderful? blessed too! Look at Israel. They

were going on wretchedly, "A stiffnecked people;" but what do I hear from the mountain? "I have not seen iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." No encouragement to carelessness, but encouragement to lean on the Beloved. We are strengthened, but we *need* it; and have to walk in the sense of our need of it.

The Lord give us beloved friends the full, blessed consciousness, of the full efficacy of the work of Christ.

(J. N. D.)

Christianity is the unveiled glory of God in the place where, in Christ's face, it is the proof that I am eternally saved. The full glory is revealed. That glory shining into our hearts is salvation. He is in glory; I am saved.

(G. V. W.)

It is a great thing to know a complete and perfect rest *au fort de l'orage*, to know that God is working out æll for the alone glory of Christ, the only worthy One and the Man of His right hand and of His counsels, and for the full and perfect blessing, too, of those who, by grace and the teaching and inclination of His Holy Spirit, are bent on the magnifying of His Son above all and above self. He loved the sheep and laid down His life for them. As the Father's Son, and one with Him, He served them in life and in death, and will serve them for ever and ever.

E. C.

SANCTIFICATION.

THE first thing to be assured of, in order to understand sanctification practically, is that we are, on believing, sanctified to God: "By which will we are sanctified by the offering of Jesus once for all." "Both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." If a believer died the moment after he believed, like the thief on the cross, he is sanctified and fit for the paradise of God, because in the act of death he would have been divested of all the old thing, and nothing could go into paradise but the new, and nothing else will at any time (no matter how long a believer may live here) go into paradise but what is new—what is of God.

When a believer is quickened he is born of God, and this is sanctification of the Spirit. But when he remains here, surrounded by the flesh, he learns practical sanctification. If he had died on believing, he would have been divested of all the grave clothes, but as he remains in the body he has to learn practically what it is to be divested of the influence of the old things, and to walk in the midst of them in the grace and Spirit

of Christ; and, as he does, he is practically sanctified.

Now before there can be any step in, or knowledge of, practical sanctification, there must be a knowledge of what holiness really is. If a believer does not know what holiness is, he is like one looking for a thing of which he knows nothing at all—like a blind man trying to comprehend light before he can see. I cannot know any sentiment until I have been affected by it, hence it is said there is no word in any language for an idea which has not yet been apprehended. If a thing is not apprehended, there is no want for the word or sign which would convey it.

Now the work of Christ *lands* the believer in “the holiest of all.” He is rescued from death and judgment, brought from the deepest and darkest distance in one step, through His work, into the brightest place—the holiest of all. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. That blood certifies the believer’s title to be there, and his place is there for ever. There only can he acquire a sense of holiness—of that separation from all defilement which suits God. As God’s own righteousness only suits Him as to conduct, so His own holiness only suits Him as to associations.

The believer has not entered into it, has not tasted of the true effect of Christ’s work for him, if he has not entered into the holiest of all. True,

many quickened souls do not enjoy the holiest of all, and very often they try to be holy in order that they may reach an assured resting-place before God. The fact is, like the prodigal, their very approximation to God in the sense of His love in receiving them, only awakens in them the sense of their unfitness to be near. They would fain brush up the old clothes, instead of seeing that they, the old things, are passed away, and that in new things only can they be really at ease in the Father's house.

Thus it is as divested of an evil conscience, and by the separating power of the word cleansed from our own surroundings that we draw near: The heart sprinkled from an evil conscience and the body washed with pure water. It is here the believer first acquires the sense of holiness. An entirely new sense to him, and one which is wholly unique, even as no art of the apothecary could compound anything like unto the holy anointing oil.

Many are led away by a spurious article because they do not know the genuine one. Thus Romanism beguiles many a one by propounding a severe self-mortification for holiness. When the believer has once tasted of holiness, what it only is, he must be aware of what is contrary to it; and when he has left his place in the holiest. I can never lose my place in the holiest, Christ's blood has obtained it for me.

I do, alas! constantly lose my enjoyment in it. But the place remains mine, as David's place at the king's table remained his though he did not occupy it.

Now, when my place in the holiest is assured to me and holiness is known to me, if I had no connection with the flesh and the world, there would be no departure from it; but seeing that I am in a body of sin, and that I am constantly liable to defilement and consequent deprivation of the enjoyment of the holiest, I should be unable to recover my place were it not for the Lord's present ministry washing my feet.

This blessed ministry is to restore me to a place that I have already enjoyed. When I am defiled I cannot resume my place in the holiest until my feet are washed. If I have never enjoyed my place in the holiest, even though my conscience is distressed because of my failure, I have not the feeling that I am deprived of it, because I could not feel that I had lost anything which I had never enjoyed.

Now the washing of the feet sets forth the great principle of sanctification. It is not merely a confession of the error and thus a removal of it. At conversion all our sins were forgiven, as they affected us in the eye of God: being forgiven we were sanctified; we belong to God in the holiest through Christ's work; any sin committed after conversion is a return to the flesh. But the flesh

has been judicially terminated in the cross, and if not judged by the believer must be judged by the Lord: "Our God is a consuming fire."

When my feet are washed I am made sensible not only of forgiveness, but of the removal of the defilement which I had contracted. In Numbers xix. the defiled one was sprinkled with the water of separation, in which were the ashes of the sin-offering. The Spirit of God brings before my soul the ashes, the token of accomplished judgment. I am made sensible that I have gone back to that for which Christ suffered at the hand of God; so that it is not merely the offence which is forgiven, but the deeper work of judging the flesh, reaching the *root* from which the evil springs that is before me. When it is only the offence that is before the conscience, it is more the disgrace to oneself; but when it is the defilement, it is one's loss or estrangement from God and our true place with Him.

I have said we have the true principle of all sanctification here; it is not merely the stopping of an offence, but it is the supplanting of the flesh in its root by Christ, and this is real practical sanctification. Let us examine the mode by which this practical sanctification is produced.

If I had died on conversion I should have been divested of every atom of the old, and perfectly

fit, because of Christ's work, to enter into heaven. If I am fit the first moment, I am fit every moment. I do not get more fit by living in a sinful body in a corrupt world; but as I should have dropped every atom of the old man had I died on conversion, so, if I remain here, the power of Christ's life in me is to supplant the old man which is corrupt. As I live in the Spirit I do not fulfil the lusts of the flesh—Christ liveth in me. All depends on the garden I sow in. If I sow to the flesh, of the flesh I reap corruption; but if to the Spirit, life everlasting.

In John xvii. 17, the Lord desires for His disciples that they should be sanctified; and the measure which is to be effected is: "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Now this refers to the new order of which they were as of God. The word here is the counsel of God; an entirely new order of the Father was now to come out. 1 John iii. 1, explains it. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." The sanctification resulting from this would be the manifestation here of the new order; not any improvement in the old, but a displacing of the old; as a tree when it grows displaces the soil by which it is surrounded.

I have real liberty when the flesh has no place, when Ishmael is morally cast out and kept out. There is a new growth in me. Christ liveth in me, and as He increases I am practically more

sanctified; the old tastes, the weeds that grew in the old soil, are overpowered by the new thing, like the way an aged evergreen shrub by degrees monopolises a plot in a garden. The soil that would ordinarily grow weeds is so completely overshadowed by the shrub that no weeds can grow; not that the soil is any better, but that there is no room for them.

Now in order to promote the growth effectually, the Lord adds: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified through the truth." The heart of the believer drawn away from the things here to Christ where He is, would be practically dissociated from the hindering influence here; setting the mind on things above and not on things on the earth. The more I am of the divine order, the more I should be distanced from the men of the world; and the more my heart was drawn away out of everything after Him who had left everything here, the more detached I should be from the things on the earth and the scene of them. For practical sanctification I require both to know that I am of a new generation among the old, as a butterfly among caterpillars; and I require to be removed from the *leaves* on which caterpillars feed, in order that my old tastes should not be ministered to, and I should sow to the flesh. This then is the nature of sanctification.

Finally there are two ministries by which it is

promoted. One is the word, Ephesians v. : "That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of the water through the word." The other is discipline, Hebrews xii. 10: "That we should be partakers of his holiness." Now these two ministries work hand in hand, one inside, the other outside. I do not speak of the chastening here for the works of the flesh; doubtless that is to silence the root that has not been judged.

There is then the ministry of the word by which the Lord leads our hearts into such enjoyment with His glories and interests as the Queen of Sheba had with Solomon, so that there is no spirit left in us. There is a sensible dropping off of the old things. To God I am outside myself, so that things once thought indispensable and fascinating are now superseded. The grave clothes are for the moment gone, and I breathe freely in a holy atmosphere. The wonder and beauty of His mind and thoughts quite surpass the small selfish enjoyments of my poor heart. I am drawn nearer to Him; and the nearer I am, the more distinctly do I become suited to Him. Like Rebekah, who, when she saw Isaac, lighted off the camel and threw a veil over herself, so, as I see Christ by faith, I lose sight of myself; Christ's presence makes me suited to Himself. He refuses all that is not of Himself, and gives prominence and countenance to all that is of Himself: "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth

forth the smell thereof." When I see Him I shall be like Him, and the more I behold the glory of the Lord, the more I am moulded into its likeness. His word instructs me in the greatness and beauty of His things.

This ministry is within me, but discipline is from without, and concurrent: "All things work together for good to them that love God, that are called according to His purpose." There is chastening or discipline for unjudged failure: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The flesh unjudged is judged; but I refer more to the discipline, which promotes holiness. The earnest soul drinks Marah, refuses the things which minister to the flesh, looks not upon the wine when it is red, but seeks to be always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in the body.

Discipline helps in order to this: "We who live are always delivered unto death, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal bodies." It is to help those who are progressing; something like pruning to bring forth more fruit; but it is constant and unremitting, indicating that one is an unceasing object of interest. The cloud of witnesses in Hebrews xi. all suffered for righteousness, but their sufferings tended to detach them from the world, and connect them more absolutely with God. As it has been said, every blow

Stephen received was loosening him from all here, liberating him from all of man, that he might the more fully enter into all that is of God. Thus suffering is not only a testimony, but a help to holiness to the sufferer.

The aim of all discipline is to free me of everything which hinders Christ in me; so that, while the ministry of the word opens out to me the beauty and glory of my portion in Christ, the discipline through circumstances detaches me from the weights which hinder me here. It is ever where a believer has most vanity or self-confidence that discipline makes its mark. If Jacob be a very active man, he becomes lame. If Moses be a muscular man, he must learn by forty years in the wilderness not to trust in himself. And Paul is crippled where he feels it most. God will stain the pride of all men.

The sanctified man is a body of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give its glow; every dark part driven out, and Christ reigning in the heart. The body, simply His vessel, or medium, for expressing His own will and pleasure.

J. B. S.

READINGS ON PHILIPPIANS I. AND II.

CHAPTER I.

IN this assembly all the saints at Philippi are addressed, with the bishops and deacons; these, we have seen, are not even alluded to in Corinthians, where the God of order was correcting the disorders which abounded. The gifted persons were powerless to correct it, possessing their gifts apart from communion with the divine Giver. Still it was God's assembly at Corinth, and the saints, simply as such, are in view. All were in the house of God—the "sanctified in Christ Jesus" alone, members of His body. Of such exclusively is composed the assembly which Christ builds (Matt. xvi.), for the assembly is looked at in more than one aspect in Scripture.

"With all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place" includes the whole professing church. As we have seen, all was disorder at Corinth, and there was none to help. Bishops are not mentioned, and the gifted persons out of communion with the mind of God. The result was that they—the saints—became more immediately the object of the care of God Himself. The assembly was God's assembly, they were God's building, God's husbandry; and Paul,

as one of God's workmen, His messenger to them.

If overseers or deacons had failed or were absent, could God become the servant of His own ordinances? And the apostle, not searching out iniquities, but earnestly desiring to recognise any good thing amongst them, tells them that he thanks God always for the grace of God given to them in Christ, in that they had been enriched in Him in all word of doctrine and in all knowledge.

But how cold, and unlike the opening of the address to the Philippians! The uniting power of a common interest in the work, and of joint participation in the sufferings and conflicts of the gospel, which, in a beautiful way, he speaks of as a person, was wanting at Corinth. It was a poor substitute for what he found at Philippi, to talk of gifts and gifted men. The gifts were still there; but the connection between the streams and the fountain hardly manifest.

But to proceed with our chapter. "I thank my God for my *whole* remembrance of you." Not a break nor a gap from the beginning to the present hour, not a supplication to God in which their names were omitted, and this with accompanying joy. The ground of it, their fellowship, not here with Paul, but with the gospel itself, suffering evil with it, according to the power of God, not ashamed of the testimony of their Lord.

But his joy in those saints was not limited to the remembrance of their ways from the first day: his thoughts about them ran on into the future, even unto the day of Jesus Christ—the day of glory, with boundless confidence in Him who had begun the good work in them, that He would complete it unto that day. But this confidence in God respecting them was united in Paul with a conviction as to their spiritual condition, founded upon their attitude both towards the gospel and towards himself, so that it was only a *right thing* in him to feel this. With what delicacy and grace, both of the Spirit surely, he tells them of his feelings towards them. They had Paul in their hearts, and in his bonds and the defence of the gospel shared the grace given to him.

What uniting bonds were these! He loved them with the affections of Jesus Christ Himself. "Ye have me in your heart;" they were linked up with him in the maintenance of the truth, the object one, the conflict one. If a man is feeding on the bread of the mighty, he becomes single-minded and single-hearted, and deeply happy. Paul was the channel through which God was feeding them with this bread. "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in *Jesus Christ* for me by my coming to you again." *There* was the true bread of the mighty! It was in Christ these blessed affections were realised.

Surely these few verses unfold a scene of

remarkable moral beauty, the "bond of perfectness" binding together in blessed affections (the bowels of Jesus Christ, as he calls it) the apostle and the beloved Philippians.

But this longing after them in the bowels of Jesus Christ tells itself out in more than words. He *prays* that the love already in them may abound yet more and more ; no measure here, for it was really divine love, though he calls it theirs — "the love of God shed abroad in the heart," but with special characteristics, *full knowledge* and *all intelligence*. What a glorious thought ! love for ever growing, both in itself and in full knowledge and intelligence. Whence such thoughts as these ? Ah ! we need not say whence, but how ? Jesus Himself was filling his heart, and coming out through this channel to theirs. And Paul was thinking of Him in this passage, not as at the right hand, but as in His own day ; the day of glory and of power come ; and of the Philippians being pure and without offence for that day. Compare 1 Thessalonians iii. 12, 13, "In order to the confirming your hearts unblamable in holiness . . . at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

Paul has evidently left the old things behind ; the subject here is toil and suffering, labouring amongst and against adversaries, and suffering for and with Christ in view of the day of manifested glory. A great part of our deplorable

weakness flows from this, that what that day of glory means for Him and for us, is practically lost for the hearts and minds of so many of His people. He comes with all His saints into the scene of *His* glory and *theirs*: the creature is expecting the *revelation* of the sons of God, when He is revealed they are *revealed* with Him. It is in view of this glorious day that the saints suffer for and with Christ in spirit: these sufferings and glories cannot be separated "If we suffer we shall reign" (not *live*).

In none of these passages have we the standing of believers in Christ, no sitting in heavenly places, but the responsibility of pilgrims in the wilderness, in view of salvation through and out of it at the end.

In another aspect, in connection with the work finished on the cross, they were already saved. Forgiven, justified, accepted, and united by the Spirit to Christ glorified, they were fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light on taking the first step into the wilderness. But here the apostle is not speaking of what had been done *for* them, but expressing his confidence that what God had begun *in* them, "He would complete unto the day of Jesus Christ."

Now look at the character in which his heart contemplated them as fit for Jesus Christ's day: love abounding in itself, as also in full knowledge and in all intelligence. Then there was to be

spiritual judgment and appreciation of the things that are more excellent, in view of purity and being without offence for Jesus Christ's day. And finally, their being complete (filled) as regards proofs of righteousness, to God's praise and glory. What termini are these to the trials of the wilderness! Christ's day and God's praise and glory!

Verse 12. The subject changes, and we have Paul's history of himself in relation to surrounding circumstances; but everything, to the least detail, is for the profit of the saints. Contemplated from *above*, everything was in favour of the man who said, "This one thing I do." Whatever men might say of the power of circumstances, it is evident that the prisoner of Jesus Christ was ever "master of the situation," as men say. It was really Christ in him in the power of the Spirit. Compare what he says in 2 Corinthians ii.: "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ."

Through his captivity at Rome, the name of Jesus was first heard in the Prætorium, as it had once reached the ears of the prisoners at Philippi. The circumstances *there* were the dungeon, the stocks, and the midnight darkness. Was Paul making melody in his heart in the midst of them, praising God with singing, above or beneath those circumstances? God Himself was there in Spirit! The prisoners listened. What name was that

which reached them through the dungeon walls? (for Paul was in the inner prison). Was that a mere circumstance? I think not, and that one sees there also the effect of the presence of Him whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not.

At Rome, he says, his bonds had become manifest as being in Christ, in *all* the Prætorium, and in all others, or in all other places. (See New Translation.) And most of the brethren were emboldened to speak the word without fear, trusting in the Lord through his bonds. Thus the "Name" was made known everywhere, and the brethren encouraged to proclaim it without fear. Such was the result of Satan's efforts to destroy it, and of God's purpose to glorify it; and the instrument in all this service, the poor prisoner of Jesus Christ. To him might be aptly applied the well-known lines:

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

His free and quiet spirit was in perfect liberty, where there is neither "Greek nor Jew," nor Roman neither! but where "Christ is everything, and in all."

We see now that circumstances are only occasions in the hand of power for the accomplishment of God's will. Some preached Christ out of contention, for envy and strife: "What then," he says, "Christ is preached, and I rejoice, and will

rejoice, for even this will turn out to my salvation (looked at as realised at the end of the race) through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." In these words we note his lowliness and dependence; farther on he says, "I have *learned*," and "I *know*;" but this was the road he took upheld by their prayers, and the "supply of the Spirit of Christ" (increase of spiritual energy). He does not say "Spirit of *God*," because Christ was immediately before his mind, and he was seeking to follow Him in the path which He had traversed, in all the energy of the Spirit of holiness, not one footmark out of place, not one thought to refuse, not one thing to regret. Paul was not ignorant of the end of the wondrous course finished by the "leader and completer of faith" Himself, in the glorification of God, the revelation of the Father, the accomplishment of the work given Him to do, the conquest of the world. His blessed servant could say at the end of *his* course, "I have kept the faith." He could not, like His divine Master, be the object of faith; but the creature has not reached a more elevated point in the race set before us than that marked out in these simple words, "I have kept the faith." Never had mortal man had such treasures committed to his keeping: "the faith," "the name of Jesus," and "the ministry," "to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God."

How his heart responded to the great commission, his pen has described in words never equalled by man in feeling and simplicity: "What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." When the Holy Spirit in every city witnessed that bonds and tribulations awaited him, his answer was: "I make no account of my life as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the glad tidings of the grace of God." And finally he exclaims, when the conflict was ended, "I have kept the faith."

The last circumstance, if men will call it so, of the way, death, was imminent. Did that give him trouble? Surely he was saying in faith, "Though an host should encamp against me, whom shall I fear?" It is not here, "I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus," but "My earnest expectation and my hope, in all boldness, as always, Christ shall be *magnified* in my body, whether by life or by death." Christ was his life, and death gain, and he was always bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus.

By the grace of God, through faith, both the life and death of Christ were Paul's. Christ was his life, and "identified with him in the likeness of his death," and united to him in heaven by

the Holy Ghost, he was already spiritually in a place where circumstance, as a thought or expression, has no meaning or application. What are the circumstances of the eternal life of which Paul lived? His own he refuses, saying, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me." Was that life subject or superior to circumstances? It is hid with Christ in God; there he is speaking of its source on high; we do not talk of circumstances there. Dead to all that Christ was dead to, and alive in Him to God, that life is not subject to circumstances, though in one down here it may pass through them, manifesting itself in a power that is really divine, as expressed in the words, "I have strength for all things *in him* that gives me power."

But in many a one of our day, only the contrast to all this is discernible, judged of according to appearances. It is sometimes said even of a Christian, he is "a creature of circumstances." Was Paul that? What was the world, what the things in it, to one who wanted to be out of it with Christ? But as His saints were here, how could he cease to care for them! It was more necessary for their sakes that he should abide; and so, divinely guided and assured, he knew that he should abide with them for their joy in faith and *progress* in faith, the only kind of *progress* he ever thought of; but the end of this progress and joy was that their boasting in Christ Jesus might

abound. For Paul's heart, every thought of blessing, whether on earth or in heaven, had Christ for its source, centre, and end.

And now, his last thought in this chapter, he presses on them the claims of the glad tidings of the Christ. Their hearts would own them in standing fast in one spirit, with one soul, labouring together in the same conflict with the faith of the gospel, personified here, as in the other passage: "Suffer evil along with the glad tidings."

What a blessed thought! association with the gospel as with a person, participating in its afflictions and conflicts. Who entered into this conflict like the apostle himself, or, being in it, behaved himself as he did? How many have been able to say at the end, and how soon that comes! "I have fought the good fight?"

And note what he says by the way: "Now thanks be to God, who always leads me in triumph in the Christ." Their not being frightened by adversaries was a demonstration to *them* of destruction, but to the saints, of God's salvation. To them to suffer was a *gift*; were they, in accepting of it, the creatures or the masters of circumstances in the power of the life of Christ, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus?

The truth as it is in Jesus is a wonderful thing—the life of God in man. Here it is all practical; you get a man realising what he teaches. Without anything like pretension or affectation, the Lord

Jesus Christ in heaven was the Lord of his heart. The Lord said: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." That is the divine way of helping the saints. Paul has apprehended the glorious thought, and has found in Christ an object for himself supremely above the saints whom he loved so well, and was ready to die for. Separation to Christ—His glory, honour, interests, is the measure of all true love and care for His saints. As far as the Holy Ghost works in me unhinderedly, you see a person who can really be a blessing to the saints.

We are to conduct ourselves worthily, it does not say of human principles, but "of the glad tidings of the Christ;" and, as said elsewhere, "of the Lord unto all well-pleasing."

Finally, it is through the priesthood of Christ, His advocacy on high, the supply of His Spirit, the intercession of saints, and putting on the whole armour of God, that Paul speaks of salvation realised at the end of the course; it is thus that God brings us through the wilderness. In another aspect, according to divine teaching, the first step into the wilderness was taken with the knowledge of eternal salvation, where it is viewed as the fruit of the work finished on the cross. To Him who accomplished it be glory for ever.

CHAPTER II.

Paul, conscious of the power of the life in which he lived, and strengthened from its source, was far from being insensible to the difficulties and trials by which the saints are, on every side, surrounded. He had himself been pressed beyond *his* power, but the strain put upon the vessel only brought out the surpassingness of the power which perfected itself in the vessel's weakness; the life of Jesus was manifested in his body. As the sufferings of Christ abounded towards him, so, through Christ, abounded his encouragement also. The encouragement he received from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ had this beautiful meaning for Paul's spirit, that he should be able to encourage those who are in any tribulation whatever, through the encouragement which he had of God. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was learned, by him, in yet other characters in the school of experience, as the God of all encouragement and the Father of compassions.

What precious knowledge is this for one's own blessing, and indispensable for service amongst His suffering people! With what exquisite skill and delicacy he ministers such encouragement, we have had proofs in the previous chapter; how he delights to tell them of his thankfulness to God for his whole remembrance of them; of

his unwearied supplication for them all with joy, and that the occasion of it was their fellowship with the gospel from the first day. They had shared in its afflictions and triumphs, he desires now that they may share in its conflicts also ("in the same conflict with the faith of the gospel").

Having thus associated them with the portion the gospel has in this world, he next associates them with *himself*: "Ye have me in your hearts, and that both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the glad tidings ye are all participators in my grace." What could be more encouraging to the saints than praise like this from the "apostle of Jesus Christ"?

He had confidence respecting them that He who had begun the good work in them would complete it unto Jesus Christ's day: he had *confidence*, too, that it was better for them that he should remain, that their boasting might abound in Jesus Christ through him, by his presence again with them, so he knew that he should abide with them. They had the same conflict which they saw in him and now heard of in him.

There were many links in the chain that bound together the apostle and the Philippians, but we have not all the links yet. There were comforts in Christ of which they were the channel. We must remember that their interest in him had somewhat slackened; it was but for a moment; they had revived their thinking of him. (Chap.

iv. 10, New Trans.) Yet surely they did think of him, he would not allow the thought that they had forgotten him; it must be that they had lacked opportunity of communication.

He rejoices greatly, but it was in the Lord, the comforts were in Christ; his heart owns the source; where but in Him could he enjoy them?

God Himself had accepted the things sent to His servant, they were agreeable to Him, an odour of sweet savour, an acceptable sacrifice. See how, in thinking of them, he connects them with God, with Christ and with himself.

But these comforts in Christ were the consolations of love—what God is in His nature—and had yet another character: they were fruits of the fellowship of the Spirit. In speaking of their affections and compassions he is thinking rather of the saints in themselves. What heart but God's could have perceived all this in the revival of their thinking of Paul? in whose heart God's love was flowing by the Holy Ghost, who gave proofs of His indwelling when He thus filled the heart and mind with thoughts which do not belong to man.

By this comfort and consolation and fellowship, his heart, we can see, was enlarged, his mouth opened unto the Philippians, but his joy not yet filled up; that would be realised when they thought the same things, had the same love, were joined in soul, thinking one thing. (New Trans.)

Elsewhere he speaks of the unity of the Spirit, and in a more abstract way; here it was rather the realisation of practical union. The standard is very high; it would be felt in the conscience to be above the measure of human thinking; that is just what Paul feels, and he meets it by saying, "Let this mind [what Christ thought, or the thinking of Christ] be in you." Subsisting in the form of God [effulgence of His glory and exact expression of His being,] ever thinking the same thing," with Him, "thinking one thing," one with Him in nature and glory, Christ emptied Himself when in the form of God. Found in figure as a man He humbled Himself, and became obedient even unto the death of the cross.

"Emptied," "humbled," "obedient," these were the forms in which the thinkings of Christ present Him to us, bringing before us the grace of Him who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven.

Each beautiful word, and oh, how beautiful! as thus applied to Him, wakes up the dormant affection of His own, while sounding in the awakened conscience the judgment of the first man.

But the Philippians had already the mind of Christ according to 1 Corinthians ii. The *thoughts* of that mind connected with the place He had taken—His pathway here—are the theme of the apostle in this place. How often we find that these *thoughts* are neglected by our light and

selfish hearts, which are only deceived when we think of enjoying the fruits of His atoning work apart from communion with Him in the further knowledge of Himself as revealed in the word.

We talk of *our* salvation, *our* joy, and *our* happiness; of the freedom wherewith He hath made us free, more than of Him who is the Source of all the blessing; and, in a certain sense, we talk and think rightly, too, for it *is* our salvation, the joy, too, in it is given us, and that freedom has made us free indeed. But to stop there, in the place where power and love divine have set us free, is not to think rightly; but to lose the strength even of the joy of deliverance, and to come short of that boasting in Christ Jesus which the heart of the apostle was proposing for them. For this is connected with deeper and ever-deepening knowledge of the divine Person.

That He had overcome the world, revealed the Father, and finished the work which He had given Him to do, they knew already; but the *mind* that was in Christ Jesus upon coming into the world, the *thoughts* of that mind revealing His relations as man to God, had not been the subject of the apostle's special unfolding; yet it is impossible to think of any subject more interesting to the hearts of His people, of anything more separative in its nature. The unveiled face in heaven is not more attractive than the marred face on earth.

Have you ever compared the "mind" in which Jesus commenced and ended His wondrous course through this world, with the works with which He closed it? the mind as expressed in "emptied," "humbled," "obedient;" the works in, "overcome the world," "revealed the Father," "finished the work." If you have, will you say which are the most perfect, the thoughts or the works? but this is what none can answer. They have each and alike their beginning and accomplishment in Himself. Besides, how compare that which is of infinite moral beauty with something else which is of exactly the same character? Where all is light and no darkness at all, it would be like comparing sunbeam with sunbeam; yet even there some inequalities might be found; but here, none.

In the passages we have been looking at we cannot help seeing that the deed is but the necessary outflow and accomplishment of the thought according to all its perfection. Had He not been the emptied One, how could He have taken the body prepared for Him, in which, crucified through weakness, He could finish the work, having revealed the Father? If He had not humbled Himself in the world, of which Satan was the god, how could He have overthrown him? And if not obedient, instead of overcoming the world He would have been overcome by it. In John viii. He tells us that He was altogether that which He said. (See New Trans.)

Thus was He infinitely and equally reflected in what He thought, said, and did.

The apostle is not merely saying, I want you to know about this mind which was in Christ, presenting it as he did objectively; but, let this mind be in you, subjectively, as they say. In this lay the secret of power. All the grace of the Lord Jesus is unfolded in the revelation of "this mind," and there is no teacher like grace, carrying with it salvation as well as instruction, as Titus ii. 11 teaches.

But whatever the essential blessedness and attractiveness of this mind, and they were indeed infinite, they were in One found in figure as a man. It was a Man's heart which was the scene of all these holy exercises and affections, in which He was perfectly before God as well as for Him, a most wondrous thing in this world; a Man fully and absolutely for God in every thought of His heart, all closing on earth in one supreme thought and gift. He gave Himself (for us) an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour. It will be remarked, too, that His enemies, the instruments of His humiliation and death, have no place in the passage before us. (Phil. ii.) Neither saint nor sinner occupy our attention here; it is a Man before God in all His thoughts. And then the mind of God about that wondrous Man, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, in infinite contrast with

the first man, disobedient even unto death—the wages of sin.

And now the Philippians are to have God's mind about this obedient Man, His whole being's exclusive object. He had been crucified through weakness, therefore it is said what God (the name of power) did, in highly exalting Him.

In "raised from the dead by the glory of the *Father*," are further and deeper thoughts; thus we learn that the power of God and the glory of the Father, were necessarily engaged in the exaltation of Jesus. This was His personal name, the name by which He was known in humiliation. Yet the name was a mystery in itself, for it means Jehovah the Saviour. This name had been announced even before His birth by an angel. Who amongst His own had known its glorious meaning?

But we are not occupied here with man's mind; God's mind about Him is the great and only thought here. Jesus is the name in heaven. God has granted Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly, and earthly, and infernal beings. This is God's present answer to the rejecters of His holy Servant Jesus. So, when His authority and Messiahship were disowned, the apostle tells them that "God has made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The kings of the earth were there, and the rulers were gathered together

against the Lord and against His Christ; indeed they did imagine a vain thing when they stood against His Anointed, for what is the present result? God has invested Him in glory with these very titles, Lord and Christ, and granted Him the great name that is above every name, that every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to God the Father's glory. This is God's present answer to rejecters of "Jesus."

It will be understood that the glory spoken of here is the glory given by God to the anointed Man Christ Jesus; the glory looked for in John viii. was not one of divine names and titles; nor is it simply Man before God, but the Son before the Father asking for glory *with Him*, as He says, "Along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was." He had a right to it all in the title of His Person; but claims it on the ground of His having glorified the Father, and in view of for ever glorifying Him.

In Philippians the glory was in relation to the creature, every knee bowing, every tongue confessing; in John xvii. it is in relation to the Father alone: "Glorify thou me with thine own self."

The Scriptures present us with yet other forms of His glory, as in Psalm ii.: "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

But to return to our chapter, we may see now the unspeakable importance of the exhortation: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." No such words had ever been spoken to man; they would have been incomprehensible in a religion made for man in the flesh. It needed first that the "Life" should have been manifested, and consciously possessed, by those to whom they were addressed, for they are the expression of that life on earth. To angels they would be wholly inapplicable: glorious beings though they are, but how carry this mind which was in Christ! They had kept their first estate, excel in strength and do His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word. In all this they are the condemnation of man, who did not keep his first estate, whose condition was marked by weakness and disobedience to His commandments, and refusal to hearken to his word.

But Satan's apparent triumph in his fall has been an occasion for the revelation of ways and counsels of grace, into which these glorious beings desire to look (1 Pet. i. 12), and by which they learn the all-various wisdom of God. Indeed we did not keep our first estate, and angels kept theirs. But see what God has done for the saints according to His own eternal purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before angels were. Angels are wondrous beings, but they have not the place we have. We have to do with God in a way angels

have not. He has given us the glorious estate of the second Man risen and set over all creatures, Head of the new creation. Moreover grace and counsel in Christ are not dependent upon creature responsibility.

Again, angels excel in strength, but it is angel strength in which they do excel. Of man it is said "without strength;" the weakness of saints, however, is but the inlet to the power of Christ, His strength perfecting itself in their weakness. If angels do His commandments, still it is in the obedience of angels, a blessed thing! But the obedience of saints is the obedience of Christ Himself—sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. i. 2.)

They are not ashamed of the holy angels now, for their gain—in the possession of the estate, strength, and obedience of the second Man, a place never occupied by creature before—immeasurably surpasses their loss in nature's fall.

What a mighty sanction for a life of obedience was God's exaltation of the obedient, emptied One—the name which is above every name which He gave Him!

With regard to motives and encouragements Paul has nothing now to add. The obedience of Jesus had been perfected in holiness, and God had marked His delight in it, in exalting the obedient Man to a place far above all creatures. In the spirit of this obedience, which they had

seen perfected in Christ, they had to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, (this working is too serious to admit of lightness; and the more diligently, that Paul was not with them, were they to work out their own salvation; or, as Peter expresses it, "grow up to salvation." (1 Pet. ii. 2, New Trans.) This meaning of salvation has been spoken of already. It is God, he says, who works in you, (internal operation of power) both the willing and the working according to His own good pleasure. In the first chapter he had expressed his confidence that He who had begun a good work in them would complete it unto Jesus Christ's day.

They were to be "harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a perverted generation; among whom they appeared [as it is said of the heavenly bodies] as lights in the world. Holding forth the word of life so as to be a boast for me in Christ's day, that I have not run in vain nor laboured in vain." Man's day yielded no measure for Paul's exercises of heart or conscience; for me, he told the Corinthians, it is the very smallest matter that I be examined of you or of man's day. No; it was Jesus Christ's day which alone would reveal the true character of the running and labouring and thinking of Paul. Blessed and solemn thought! It was the judgment of Jesus Christ's day that lifted him above the judgment of man's day.

He had spoken of the Philippians being his boast in the day of Christ. What would they feel when they read the following lines which tell of his devotedness to *them*, even unto the death; that, if poured out on the sacrifice of their faith (their offering was the fruit of their faith, a sacrifice to God), if my life be taken, he says, I shall consider it as a libation poured out on the sacrifice of your faith. Their service, faith, and work, and that of the apostle were one.

Was I right in saying he had nothing to add, in view of ministering motives for unity, when, in this passage, he ministers to them the fruits of Christ's Spirit working in him?

Never before had the creature, man, spoken as this man speaks here. So pure and holy were the affections with which he regarded them, now in connection with Jesus Christ's day, and now with his own death; fruit of a faith and love which were common to both. They were to rejoice in common. How great will be their rejoicing together in Christ's day!

May we live more in that day! Of Timothy and Epaphroditus one can say nothing higher than that they sympathised perfectly with Paul in these affections and interests. How blessed and precious are the sympathies which are the fruits of the inworking of the Spirit of Christ!

(R. E.)

READING ON JOHN XIV.

IN the previous chapter He tells them He was going away; here He tells what would be their comfort. He went to prepare a place for them. He brings us into the same place as Himself. He would come for them Himself—not send for them.

To be conformed to the image of His Son is the end of all knowledge; and God's purpose was to give us a place with His Son; He is the Firstborn among many brethren. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, are all of one;" one set: that is the key of all blessing.

Question. Verse 7 says: "Ye should have known my Father also, and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him." How does He mean they would have known the Father? not in relationship?

No; not in relationship till the Holy Ghost came; but He was there the revelation of the Father; purity, holiness, love, all that the Father is was manifested in Him; and He was going to the Father, so they knew where; then they knew the way, for *He* was the way. The moment the Son was there the name of the Father was revealed. God has come *out* in Christ, man has gone *in* in Christ. When God does come out, it

is the Father revealed in the Son. There are four names by which God has revealed Himself. To Abraham it was as God Almighty; to Israel as Jehovah; Most High in the millennium; and to us, the Father revealed in the Son. This is the "hidden wisdom ordained before the world unto our glory," not revealed before; but God "has revealed them unto us by his Spirit." I get the revelation by the Holy Ghost; the words by which the revelation is communicated, and the Holy Ghost working to make me know it.

Hebrews ix. 8, and x. 19. "The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest;" and "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest." You do not get the Father in Hebrews, you get the priesthood; you do not get all the privileges, but you can go in. There is no hindrance to our going in, but it is *God's* throne, not the *Father's*.

John xvii. 21, 22. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee." The world will know it when we appear in glory, but we know it now, though the treasure is in a poor earthen vessel.

Question. But our apprehension of it does not depend on natural intelligence?

No, it is spiritually discerned.

Question. Then as it is by divine power, there is no limit to what we may have or to our going in?

No; only we do not get it all at once; but what we learn makes us capable of getting more.

Question. When He says, verse 18, "I will come to you," does He mean by the Spirit?

No, that is Christ Himself.

Verse 20. He does not say here, "the Father in me:" that had been while He was on earth; but in that day which was coming they should know another thing: "I in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." The Father had been revealed in Him; they were dull, but the thing was there for them. They never once understood what He said, never on any occasion; when they said they did, they only proved that they did not. In chapter xvi. they say: "Now speakest thou plainly;" but they dropped the *Father*, and said He came forth from *God*. And the Lord responds: "Do ye now believe?" We have the Spirit to enable us to understand. "I in the Father," not "the Father in me."

When the Spirit is come I know that Christ is in me and I in Him, and that gives me everything if I am in Him.

Question. Is there an intended difference between "abide" and "in?" Verse 17.

I get as a consequence of verse 16 He in me. We get in Acts i. 2 what was a great comfort to me; that the Holy Ghost was in Christ after His resurrection. We shall have the Holy Ghost for ever in us. The Holy Ghost is always

working; we find Him working in creation, in Christ's miracles always. By His Spirit He garnished the heavens. There is a remarkable verse in Haggai ii. 5: "So my Spirit remaineth among you."

Question. Is not the Holy Ghost's work now to take us (the Church) to Christ?

The Holy Ghost is like a steamship, not dependent on the wind. There are difficulties and hindrances by the way which He has to surmount; but, when He has brought us to heaven, there is nothing to do but to unfold to us what is there. Christ never glorifies Himself, He says: "Father, glorify thou me." He never glorifies Himself; He even gets the Holy Ghost for us from the Father. "Ye in me" brings us into all that He has received: "Not as the world giveth." The world gives away, but Christ gives by bringing us into all that He has as man.

"That I am in my Father;" that introduces me to heavenly things. They ought to have known the Father in Him down here; but now we know Him in the Father. I am there as a son as He is. When on earth He spoke of God as "my Father;" when made sin it is "my God." Afterwards as His God and Father; but it is also "*My God and your God, my Father and your Father.*" In the Epistles we get constantly God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Because ye *are* sons," &c.; we have the Father's love

and Christ's love, but besides we are conformed to the image of the Son.

Question. And that is true Christianity ?

Yes. Christianity is heavenly ; everything will be gathered up under one Head in heaven and on earth. *We* have the heavenly place ; blessed in heavenly places.

Remark. How few have really got that !

They have not got *into* it, but it is *theirs*. Many stop at being cleared from the first Adam, at the debt being paid, but they do not get hold of being put into the last Adam ; and every one brought into glory is glory to Christ, and I have got to rejoice in *His* glory, not merely that *I* am glorified.

The love of the Father is the spring and centre of the new creation.

The spirit of the world is opposed to the Spirit of Christ. I have one thing to desire, to please Christ here, to walk as He walked.

Another thing we get is God's rest ; He would have us enjoying that. You do not find rest here. If you get a meeting very happy, you may be sure the devil will try to spoil it ; there is no rest here.

Question. How do you understand verse 23, " Make our abode with him " ?

When we get *into* their abode, they make us their abode. All in this part of John is conditional. We ought to realise these things. It is from the lack of obedience that there is lack of joy.

There are two things in verse 21; he that *hath*, and *keepeth*.

Having His commands is one mark of the obedient child; a careless child would not know them. It is a wonderful thing to know that we are in Christ, and Christ in us now. Knowing what He has brought me *into* is another thing from knowing what He has brought me *out* of.

We get another thing—peace; not merely peace of conscience, though we get that, but *Christ's* peace, the peace He had when walking through this world.

Question. Would that be the same as the peace of God in Philippians iv.?

No, the peace of God is another thing; nothing *can* trouble God's peace. But Christ's peace fills my heart—walking through a scene where disturbing things are. How the blessed Lord reckons on our hearts entering into His joy. "If ye loved me ye would rejoice;" if you are thinking of yourselves you will not; but He counts on our hearts.

(J. N. D.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER III.

THE JORDAN.

BUT to return to the Jordan. At the Passover, atonement was made ; at the Red Sea, redemption was accomplished, and salvation obtained ; but here it is another question. In order to take possession of the land of Canaan, the people must be in a certain *condition*.

Between the Red Sea and the Jordan Israel had crossed the desert, and this journey is divided into two distinct parts. In the first part, up to Sinai, it is grace which leads the people—the same grace which had redeemed them from Egypt, and by which they experience the resources of Christ in the midst of all their infirmities. In the second part, after Sinai, Israel is under the reign of law, and it is then that they are proved to know what is in their hearts. The trial only demonstrated that they were “carnal, sold under sin ;” that they had no power, that their will was enmity against God, that it was not subject to the law of God, finally shewing itself in positive open rebellion when it was a question of going up unto

the mountain of the Amorites, and entering into possession of the promises.

The *condition* of Israel was an absolute obstacle to their entering Canaan. When they come to the end of their experiences in the flesh, they find the Jordan, an overflowing flood, as a barrier to their onward progress. The Red Sea hindered their escape from Egypt, the Jordan prevents their entrance into Canaan, and to attempt to cross it would be their destruction. Here we have a fresh type of death. It is the end of man in the flesh, and, at the same time, the end of Satan's power. How can we, who are without strength, withstand it? It separates us for ever from the enjoyment of the promises. "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But the grace of God has provided for it. The ark goes before the people; it not only makes them know the way by which they should go, for they had not passed this way heretofore (iii. 4), but it associates them with itself in the passage. The priests, the representatives of the people, were to take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before Israel. (Ver. 6.) It was indeed the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth (ver. 13) which was to pass on before them across Jordan, but not without them. The ark maintained its pre-eminence: "There shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits

by measure" (ver. 4); but as the eyes of the people were fixed upon it (ver. 3) they beheld at the same time the priests of the tribe of Levi who bore it. As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests rested in the waters of Jordan, they were cut off and ceased to flow. A power was there which was victorious over the power of death, and which associated Israel with the victory.

If it was thus for Israel, how much more for us! All that we were in the flesh has found its end in the cross of Christ. We can say: I am dead to sin, dead to the law; I am crucified with Christ. My eyes, fixed on the ark—on Christ—see in Him the end of my personality as a child of Adam; but in Him also a victorious power, now made mine, introduces me in resurrection-life in Him, beyond death, into the full enjoyment of the things which this life possesses: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Death itself, of course, is not yet swallowed up: "When the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan . . . the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before." (iv. 18.) But when "this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written; Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 54.) Then Christ's place, beyond all that which could hinder us, will be ours, even as to our bodies. But before

the fulfilment of these things, we can already say :
 "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory
 through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. xv. 57.)

We find then in the Jordan, in a special way, death to that which we were in our former status, and the beginning of a new status in the power of life with Christ, with whom we are risen. His death and resurrection introduce us now into all the heavenly blessings, and what we have just said explains the reason of our not finding enemies here as at the Red Sea. At the Jordan the Israelites are not pursued by Pharaoh and his host, but the enemy is in front of them, and does not begin to act until they have crossed the river.

Now they enter upon a new series of experiences. In the desert of Sinai the old man has been proved to be sin ; then follows, in type, at the Jordan, the knowledge acquired by faith, that we have been taken out of our association with Adam, and set in a new association with a dead and risen Christ ; finally, in Canaan, we have the experiences of the new man, though not without weakness and failure if there be a lack of vigilance, but with a power at our disposal, of which we can make constant use in order to be strong and to fight valiantly and resist the subtle wiles of the enemy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWELVE STONES AT GILGAL.

IN the preceding chapter we have seen that it is faith in Christ which enables us to apprehend (after an experience often as long as the forty years in the wilderness were for Israel) our deliverance from our old estate, and introduction into a new one in Christ. The soul, long exercised learns at length—and it is God who reveals it to faith—that what it was striving vainly to attain to, has not *to be* done, but is a present reality, for faith a fact, an accomplished fact, in Christ.

I used to wonder at the extreme simplicity of the language produced by the discovery of this important truth in Romans vii., whilst it takes a whole chapter to describe the experiences of a soul previous to knowing deliverance. More than this, the despairing utterance caused by the hopelessness of the situation, changes without any interlude into one of gratitude and joy: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The reason now seems simple enough. When the soul makes this discovery it learns that the deliverance which it was incapable of attaining, God had already wrought by and in Christ, so that it is no longer a thing to be accomplished. The soul discovers and appropriates it as an accomplished fact prepared long ago for faith. Then calmly and peacefully the believer can say: Henceforth I am dead,

because I am in Christ; dead with Christ, dead to the law, to the world; and "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 19, 20; Rom. vi. 10; Col. ii. 20; Gal. vi. 14.)

It is a truth which is outside the region of the intelligence; reason cannot explain it, memory cannot retain it. How often have I seen souls seeking, by similar efforts, to lay hold, so to speak, of deliverance! What was the result? When, after much painstaking, they thought they had grasped its import, a single night sufficed to disperse the illusion, just as dead leaves are swept away by a breath of wind between the evening and morning.

Ah! deliverance is not obtained in a moment, for just as there was no Jordan for Israel before the desert, so, for us, deliverance comes after we have made the discovery of what the flesh is, and not before. Deliverance itself is not an experience, but a state which faith grasps. It is only experimental in the sense that I see myself in Christ, instead of laying hold of a work accomplished outside of myself as in redemption.

Such for us is the import of the Jordan. But God desires that the memorial of this victory should be continually under our eyes. Joshua commands the representatives of the twelve tribes to take twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the feet of the priests stood firm. They were to be for a memorial unto the

children of Israel, and were to be laid in the place where the people passed their first night in the land of Canaan. The place was Gilgal, but what was the signification of the stones? They represented the twelve tribes, the people, snatched from death by the ark which had stood in the very spot where deliverance was needed, and which had stayed the waters of Jordan so that Israel could pass over. They became a monument at the very entrance of Canaan, at Gilgal, a place to which (as we shall see later on) the people had always to return; they were henceforth to be a sign constantly under their eyes and those of their children.

Now we, like Israel, stand as trophies of the victory achieved over the raging waters of the river. Christ went into death because we were there: "If one died for all, then were all dead." (2 Cor. v. 14.) But it was in order to deliver us out of death, and bring us into a new life in His own resurrection. "When we were dead in sins he hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and hath raised us up together." (Eph. ii. 5, 6.)

But the monument of this memorable work is permanently established on the other side of Jordan to serve for the maintenance of Israel's faith, a monument to be recognised at all times by the people at the entrance of Canaan. For us it is Christ, the object of our faith, the First-born from the dead, risen and entered into the

heavenly places, but a Christ who represents us there, associating us with Himself, even as He associated Himself with us in death.

Moreover God desires that Christ thus set before us should produce a corresponding moral effect in us; that, in the contemplation of Him, our consciences should be laid hold of in a lasting way. "It is a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." It is also this for us, accompanied by an inward effect. The believer, risen with Christ, has the indelible marks of His death imprinted on him, and, if such is my place in Christ, can I live any longer in the things which I have abandoned, which Christ has left in the depths of Jordan? "In that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Up to this, it is the memorial, and then comes the moral effect: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." (Rom. vi. 10, 11.)

The twelve stones at Gilgal, then, are not merely our death and resurrection with Christ (the Jordan typified that), but the memorial of this death and resurrection as seen in a risen and glorified Christ. This monument reminds us of what we have henceforth to be. In the Jordan God declares us to be dead, and it is the portion of all the people; every Christian is dead and risen with Christ; in Gilgal we have the moral realisation of this. All had crossed the Jordan,

but many amongst them perhaps cared but little to inquire the meaning of the monument in Gilgal, those stones which seemed to say in living accents to the people: "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

THE TWELVE STONES IN THE MIDST OF JORDAN.

IF the twelve stones in Gilgal spoke to Israel's conscience, there was another monument set up in the midst of Jordan which spoke seriously to their hearts. Who could see the stones which the overflowing waters had covered? They could only be known to faith. They were not typical of a resurrection-life which had passed through death and bore its impress and character; they were essentially the sign of death. The stones in Gilgal are the monument of our introduction by Christ into our privileges, and into which we only enter after having passed through death with Him; but when I think of the stones in Jordan, my heart is in communion with Him in death.

I return to sit, so to speak, on the banks of the river of death, and I say: That is my place; it is there that I was; it is there that He has been for me; He has delivered me from my old man; He has left it with all that belonged to it in the depths of Jordan; I am buried beneath its waters in the Person of Christ. What led Thee, blessed

Saviour, to take this place? Thou alone couldst claim exemption from it, and having laid down Thy life, Thou alone hadst the power to take it again. But it was Thy love to us which led Thee down to death; no other motive, save the glory of God which I had dishonoured, could have led Thee there. Thou hast not only fought the fight alone, and victoriously stayed the waters of Jordan "until everything was *finished* that the Lord commanded," (ver. 10) but those waters themselves passed over Thee. I see in this monument what death was for Thy holy soul; I recognise the memorial of the exquisite bitterness of the cup which Thou didst drink.

The twelve stones "are there unto this day." (Ver. 9.) The monument remains, the cross remains, eternal witness of a love I have there learnt to know, testimony too of the only place where God could put all that belonged to my old man.

In connection with these things, notice also what we find in verse 18: "And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before." The sentence is executed, the old man condemned, the judgment is passed, death is conquered, but death remains. What was for-

merly an obstacle to entrance, an obstacle removed by the ark which opened the pathway for us, separates us when we are once across, not only from Egypt and the desert of Sinai, but from ourselves. If it were otherwise, we could have no lasting enjoyment in the land of Canaan.

The two and a half tribes (vers. 12, 13) truly crossed the Jordan with their brethren, armed for war and prepared to fight, but there were two things of which they remained in ignorance: the value of the land of Canaan, and the value of death. The river did not arrest them when they turned to rejoin their wives, their little ones, and their cattle, who were awaiting them on the opposite shore. The country "on this side" had its attractions for them, whilst the people, who were peacefully in the enjoyment of Canaan, saw with joy that the Jordan was a barrier to separate them from all that which formerly was of any value to them.

"On that day the Lord *magnified Joshua* in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him as they feared Moses, all the days of his life." (Ver. 14.) It is thus with Christ. He is highly exalted as Saviour by the glory of the Father before our eyes, in virtue of His finished work, and, as the result of this work, the saints are introduced with Him into the present enjoyment and future possession of the glory. This will be to His everlasting glory and honour.

But the Lord will also have other crowns. The day will come for Him, which Solomon enjoyed in type, and of which it is said: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him. And all the princes and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king. And the Lord magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel." (1 Chron. xxix. 23-25.) He will reign; His people Israel will be subject unto Him, and even those whom He deigned to call His brethren will bow the knee before Him, happily and joyfully acknowledging openly in His presence that He is Lord, even as they have owned Him on earth in the days of His absence and rejection.

We find another future glory of Christ in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 23. In the time of Hezekiah, after the deliverance of Israel by the judgment of the nations in the person of the Assyrian, it is said: "And many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was recognised in the sight of all nations from thenceforth." The nations will be subject unto Him.

Finally, it is said in Philippians ii. 9-10: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,

and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Heaven, earth, and hell will bow before Him who humbled Himself even unto the death of the cross.

CHAPTER V.

CIRCUMCISION.

IN chapter i. we have traced the moral principles requisite for taking possession of Canaan; in chapter ii. we have seen that, when it is a question of heavenly places, God can go outside the limits of Israel, and bring in on the principle of faith; in chapters iii. and iv. we find the secret of entrance; and in chapter v. something further is unfolded to us, namely, how the victory is obtained. Consequently, this chapter opens (ver. 1) with a mention of the enemies. All the kings of the Canaanites and the Amorites defile, so to speak, under our eyes, but the power given them by Satan has already been broken at Jordan, in death, in the person of their Prince. In spite of that, they are too strong for the poor children of Israel, but God is going to enable them to obtain the victory over their enemies. And how? By

depriving them of all the weapons and resources which they would have found in themselves. Flesh cannot enlist in the warfare ; God judges it and sets it aside ; and this is the meaning of circumcision. Circumcision is "the putting off of the body of the flesh" in Christ. It is an accomplished fact for every believer, just as much as the Jordan is for each of us, whether or not we realise its import.

The teaching of Colossians ii. 9-15 on this point is very clear and beautiful. "In him," says the apostle, "dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily." All is in Christ, nothing is lacking in *Him*. But in verse 10, it is *we* who have all in Him ; nothing lacks for *us* : "Ye are complete in Him." We cannot, then, seek to add anything to ourselves apart from Him. Now we come to circumcision. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Not only, says the apostle, is there nothing to add, but there is nothing to cut off from those who are in Him. The body of the flesh is judged, you are deprived of it ; it is a thing done, it is the circumcision of Christ. In verse 12, we find that this end of the old man, which takes place for us in the death of Christ, becomes personal for the Christian : "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." This

passage embraces the thing in its extent, and corresponds with the two truths represented by the Jordan, namely, death and resurrection with Christ. Here then we have the establishment of two great truths: we are complete before God in Christ, and perfectly delivered from all that we are in ourselves.*

The Epistle to the Philippians (chap. iii. 3) establishes the contrast between the circumcision made with hands, and the true circumcision, that of Christ. "We are the circumcision," says the apostle, "who worship God in the Spirit." Fleshly circumcision under the law had never done that. One must have done with the flesh to be able to worship in the Spirit. Then he adds, "And who rejoice in Christ Jesus." Even religious flesh never glories in anything but itself.†

Finally, the apostle concludes by saying: "And who have no confidence in the flesh." This is true circumcision. It is the setting aside by judgment in the cross of Christ of what the word of God calls "the flesh," so that henceforth we

* In verses 13-15, we return to the Passover and the Red Sea; we are delivered from all which can be pleaded or raised against us.

† We find a proof of this in Colossians ii. 21-23. The doctrines, commandments, and teachings of men may indeed have a show of wisdom . . . inasmuch as they do not spare the body, but they are for the satisfaction of the flesh.

cannot have any confidence whatever in it, and this is a most important truth to get hold of. When it is a question of warfare, as it was for the children of Israel, we must bear on us the stigma of the death of the flesh. Notice, too, there is no thought here of trying to have done with ourselves, or of stripping ourselves. The "putting off" was accomplished at the cross; sin in the flesh was condemned there; it is a fact which faith grasps, and which becomes a practical reality as the conscience owns and accepts this judgment. The burning coal had to *touch* the lips of Isaiah, and even though the judicial fire from off the altar had exhausted every atom of its power upon the victim, and the anguish being over nothing remained but the purifying power, still the prophet had to be brought into contact with it, thus typifying the experience our consciences pass through, of divine judgment.

GILGAL.

AND the Lord said unto Joshua: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." At the Red Sea they had been delivered from the slavery of Satan and of sin; here, for the first time, they were freed by judgment from the slavery of the flesh. But the Spirit of God adds: "Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day." Here we have a second great truth. As has been already observed,

circumcision, judgment, the cutting off of the flesh, has been accomplished in Christ, but has also to be considered under an essentially practical aspect, and not purely as doctrine.

Gilgal was the place of circumcision, and if this place was to be the point of departure for the army of Jehovah before a single victory had been achieved, it was also to be the assembling place after victory (x. 15), and again the point of departure for fresh conquests. The judgment of the flesh was immovable. The people were to appropriate it to themselves continually, otherwise the flesh would work to regain what it had lost, and a first victory would never be followed by a second. We shall come upon Gilgal in the course of this book on more than one occasion; for the present let it suffice us to remember that if circumcision signifies the cutting off of "the *body* of the flesh," Gilgal is "the mortification of our *members* which are upon the earth." Colossians iii. 5-8 teaches us this in contrast with ii. 11.

Beloved, this is a daily reality, and every victory opens out fresh horizons for us in the land of promise. Without conflict there is no means of laying hold of any of our blessings, but without Gilgal there can be no victory. Which do we value most? Canaan with its warfare, or our members upon the earth? Do we prefer the passing gratification of the lusts of the flesh to the painful task of returning to Gilgal? If so,

we shall have to be taught by humiliation and chastisement how to recover the path, if, at least, we have not irrevocably lost the secret of strength in bitterness and tears and the irremediable ruin of defeat.

CANAAN'S FOOD.

THE cutting off of the flesh by the judgment executed at the cross, and the practical realisation of this judgment are the first conditions indispensable for warfare. Of what use were Saul's helmet, coat of mail, or sword, to David in fighting against the Philistine? He had to "put them off him." (1 Sam. xvii. 39.)

But there is another resource. Before going forth to fight, Israel must be seated at the table of God. To be able to withstand the toils of warfare, Israel must be nourished; that is the secret of positive strength. And what is the nourishment? Christ. He is the source of strength, and there will be no victory for the people if they have not been previously fed. What a blessed thing to enter into the conflict with hearts fed by Christ. We may certainly expect to be defeated if we advance to meet the enemy with hearts void of Christ. In the reverse case, as we shall see in the following chapter, there is nothing alarming about the combat, and may God give us each to prove this. Let us not wait until the morrow, for we may be called to fight

this very evening. Let us feed on Christ to-day, to-morrow, every moment, that we may be ready at the first signal to arise and march on to victory.

Yes, beloved, it is a Person ; it is Christ who is our food ; not truths, nor privileges, but Himself ; and He is here presented to us as food under three different aspects : the Passover, the Old Corn of the land, and the Manna.

This Passover in Canaan is the same feast that the people had celebrated in Egypt, and yet how much they differed one from the other. There, it was a people conscious of their guilt, hasting to flee, sheltered amidst the darkness and the judgment by the blood of the paschal lamb. Here, it is a people safely landed in Canaan, delivered from the last traces of the reproach of Egypt, a risen people, who have been through death, but who return in perfect peace to the starting-point, the foundation of all their blessings, to sit around the memorials of a Christ slain for them on the cross. The Passover in Canaan corresponds with what the Lord's Supper is for the Christian. And notice, it is a *permanent* food ; it will not cease in the glory ; only it will no longer be the remembrance of the Lord's death celebrated during His absence, neither shall we need something tangible to remind us of it, for our eyes will see in the midst of the throne, the Lamb Himself, as it had been *slain*, He the visible centre of the new

creation founded on the cross, the basis and pivot of eternal blessing, the object upon whom myriads of myriads gaze with adoring and universal worship.

But there is more than this in our heavenly repast. "And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day." (Ver. 11.) God gave them a food which had been unknown to them in Egypt, the old corn of the land of Canaan, a heavenly, glorified Christ, but Christ as a Man who had been through this sin-stained world in a spotless humanity, the unleavened bread, and who in this same humanity had passed through the fire of judgment like the parched corn, and who, having entered the glory in resurrection, sits as Man at the right hand of God.

Moreover He is there for us, not only as our Advocate with the Father, but as introducing us in His Person as Man into the glory. The place is prepared for man in the third heavens; he is brought in Christ into the full enjoyment of heavenly blessing. I behold this Man and say: There is my place; I am in Him, a man in Christ, possessing already the same life as He, life eternal, the life of a Man risen from among the dead; I am united to Him, seated in Him in the heavenly places, enjoying this infinite blessing by the Holy Spirit who leads me into it. Blessed

Saviour! for me Thou camest down, for me Thou didst hang on the cross; Thou art gone into the glory, and Thou hast brought me into it already in Thine own Person, previous to being with Thee and like Thee for ever.

What wondrous joy and what power there is in occupation with such a Christ! "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.) In this passage we see the result of being nourished with the old corn of the land. The soul, formed by a heavenly Christ, is able to reproduce the traits of this blessed object. Such is our portion.

Such also was that of Stephen, the faithful martyr. In him, a man on the earth, full of the Holy Spirit, as fruit of the perfect work of Christ, we see a believer in his normal character, answering perfectly to the end for which God had placed him in this world, in the midst of circumstances that were the most calculated to make him lose that character. The Spirit in him unhindered (his heart having no object on the earth, and the Holy Ghost not having to contend within him to bring him to the level of a heavenly Christ) links him with an object in heaven so as to form him here into its image. The traits of the glorified Man in heaven become in him those of a perfect man on the earth:

“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Here it is an example of what it is “to be changed into the same image from glory to glory.” It is not anything mystical, nor a vague product of human imagination; it is in our daily life, our ways, our words, by love, intercession, patience, and dependence, that we may, through grace, shew forth the likeness of a glorified Christ on whom we gaze. Is it so with us Christians in these days? Are our hearts so fed by Him that the world can see it in our lives? Can those around us catch the rays of the glory of Christ on our countenances, as with Stephen or Moses? It would not be for *us* to know it, for in this case we should have lost sight of the heavenly object, and turned our eyes upon ourselves. Moses alone in the camp of Israel wist not that his countenance shone.

“And the manna ceased on the morrow.” (Ver. 12.) Israel ate it no more; manna was wilderness food; for us a Christ come down from heaven into the midst of our circumstances to encourage us in the difficulties of the way. In contrast with Israel, we Christians are privileged to have Christ as our food in every aspect at the same time, though perhaps not at the same moment. But the manna is not a permanent food. Indispensable and most blessed as it is that the remembrance of it should remain before God always, in the golden pot, and for us in “the hidden manna,” still as food it is transitory and

sued to the journey which comes to an end. Now the Old Corn of the land will, like the Pass-over, be our lasting and eternal food; not in order that we should be, as on earth, transformed gradually into His likeness, for then "we shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body." (Phil. iii. 21.) "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John iii. 2.)

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST.

CONFLICT is about to begin, and the Captain of the host has not yet appeared. He reveals Himself at the last moment, but precisely at the needed one, "when Joshua was by Jericho." (Ver. 13.) Faith can count on Him for the time of need. Gilgal and the heavenly repast are, as we have seen, the preparations for warfare; the power, the plan, the order, the time of battle, all that and much more is the responsibility of the Captain of the host. Such a way of fighting will be incomprehensible to one who has not been at Gilgal. He would set to work with his own contrivances, would engage the enemy too soon or too late, would rush forward without the Captain of the host, make a false movement, fall, and be conquered, leaving nothing but a catalogue of defeats.

Notice with what marvellous grace this representative of Jehovah adapts Himself to the cir-

cumstances of His people, this Angel of Jehovah of whom the Old Testament so often speaks—Jehovah Himself under this mysterious character, for it is said of Him (Ex. xxiii. 21) “My name is in him.” As others have observed, He presents Himself with Israel as a Deliverer at the Red Sea, as the Companion of their journeyings in the desert, as Lord of Hosts in Canaan, and later on when the kingdom is established, He dwells in peace amongst them.

Blessed condescension! What assurance it gives to our souls. Here we see Him sword in hand, and it is this sword which will deal the blows. Israel needs no other.

Three times in the course of the people’s history, the Angel of Jehovah intervenes with the drawn sword in his hand. The first time it is to *preserve* them from threatened dangers, when Balaam, on his way to curse Israel, encounters the messenger who obstructs his road (Num. xxii. 28); the second time, in our chapter, it is to *fight with them* and obtain the victory for them; the third time, alas! it is to *judge* the people who had sinned in the person of their king. (1 Chron. xxi. 16.)

Beloved, we also have to do with the Angel in these three ways. How many times, without our even being aware of it, He meets the enemy who seeks to accuse or curse us; how often He, in grace, associates us in the combat against the

powers of darkness in the heavenly places; how often, too, He reveals Himself to us as He did to David, with His drawn sword turned against the city of God; that is to say, as the One who, for His own, is a consuming fire, who chastens and humbles them, but in order afterwards to replace His sword in its sheath, and in the end restore them.

Even that is consoling, in spite of all; but it is a terrible thing for a man to be met, like Balaam, by the Angel with the drawn sword, because, for a reward, he was selling the gift he had received from God to the devil, the accuser of the brethren. Such a path is that of a reprobate who does not know God, but how many Christians, alas! in these days of ruin, associate themselves in some manner with the way of Balaam; how many in company with the enemy of the people of God, though clad in the prophet's dress, place themselves in the hands of the world to do the enemy's work.

“And Joshua went unto him and said unto him: Art thou for us or for our adversaries?” It is impossible to be neutral in the fight, and we ought all, like Joshua, to understand this. “And the Captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.” He who reveals Himself to Joshua as Lord of hosts claims also His character of holiness.

It is impossible for those who are called to fight under a divine leader to remain associated, individually or corporately, with evil or defilement in the walk. It was partly on account of having disregarded this principle that the people were defeated before Ai. To keep unjudged evil in the heart exposes us to the judgment of God and renders us defenceless in the hands of the enemy; it is the same thing with evil in the assembly. If God is holy in *redemption*, as He shewed Himself to be to Moses in the bush (Ex. iii. 5)—and where did He make a more brilliant display of His holiness?—let us remember that He is not less holy in the *combat*, and that we can only engage in it after having loosened the shoes off our feet.

CHAPTER VI.

JERICHO.

THE people arrive at length in presence of the terrible obstacle raised to prevent their taking possession of Canaan. There is nothing the enemy hates more than seeing us in the enjoyment of our privileges, and taking a heavenly position. He is well aware that a heavenly people can escape from his hands and steal his goods; therefore his chief endeavour is to set some obstacle in the way of our onward progress.

This occurs in the history of every Christian, not necessarily at the moment of conversion, but sooner or later when it is a question of entering the path of conflict for the realisation of our heavenly calling.

The first impediment put in our way by Satan is an apparently impregnable fortress, which it is impossible to enter or to quit: "None went out and none came in." (Ver. 1.) Surely this is enough to terrify us, and to make us turn back; and this is precisely the aim of the adversary, in which, alas, he too often succeeds. Every Christian has to face at some time or other his stronghold of Jericho. I need not enumerate here the difficulties of each soul, they are diverse, but may be resumed in one word, an *obstacle*. If I set my face heavenwards, what will happen? I shall lose my position; I shall be cut short in my career; my friends will forsake me; my parents will never suffer it; I should have to give up all I love, and separate myself from the Christians amongst whom I received such blessing.

Such is often the aspect which the high walls of Jericho assume before the affrighted soul. Ah! how many Christians lose courage before the fight, and turn back.

But the soul, prepared by God, does not retreat in view of difficulties. It knows it is in possession of a means of overcoming them, and makes use of it. It is a very simple, but unique, way,

for there is no other: it is faith. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after that they were compassed about seven days." (Heb. xi. 30.) Faith is simple confidence in Another, in the Lord, and at the same time complete absence of self-confidence, for these two things are inseparable. The obstacle yields to faith. What does it matter if the walls reach up to heaven? What are they for faith? Faith counts on the power of God, and this, dear friends, is the first great characteristic of faith. "In order," says the apostle, "that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. ii. 5.) A power, absolutely divine is necessary in the fight, and can alone overthrow the obstacle, and it is solely on this power that faith rests.

We may notice, too, when faith has been appealed to, how jealous this power is of the existence of anything which could wear the appearance of human wisdom. The Captain of the Lord's host, who talks with Joshua, does not give them the choice of arms or means of warfare. They are not to make any plan or arrangement; they are not to concert as to the means for gaining the victory; God Himself has ordered everything, and faith submits to the order established by God, uses the means which He points out, and does not invent others. We must have societies, committees, conferences, money, &c., &c., is often said. Man must have them, but

faith needs nothing of the kind. God has His own means.

But, it may be said, why not simplify the path? Why all these complications? Why go round the city every day, and seven times the seventh day? Why this procession with the ark and trumpets? Faith does not ask why? It does not reason as to the means God chooses to employ; it accepts them, enters into them, and obtains the victory instead of being beaten by the enemy. It was thus at the Passover and at the Red Sea. Do you say: Then faith is without intelligence? Not at all; it first submits and then understands. Faith will tell you the reason of the seven days, the ark, the procession, the trumpets, and the shouts of joy, but it will only tell you after submission to them, otherwise it would be intelligence and not faith.

But this is not all. Faith marches forward in dependence on God, who says: "I have given into thine hand Jericho and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." Then it is put to the test. There must be patience; the people had to march thus during six days, and then patience must have her *perfect* work: "The seventh day ye shall compass the city *seven* times."

There are yet other blessed characteristics of this precious faith which we may do well to notice. It associates us with Christ, gives us part and communion with Him. God marshals

His people round the ark in the conflict. It was no longer, as at Jordan, the ark preceding the people, but here the armed men go before the ark with the priests, and the rereward comes after.

But the aim and result of association with Christ is never to exalt or attach importance to man; it exalts Christ and makes much of Him. The ark itself formed the body of the army, properly speaking, the indispensable centre, the main force; and the whole attitude of the people around it, manifestly proclaimed it. Without the ark there could be neither warfare nor victory.

Faith always renders testimony to Christ: "The seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horns passed on before the Lord, and blew with the trumpets." It was a perfect testimony to the power of the ark in presence of the enemy.

Faith is zealous to exalt and render testimony to Christ, zealous for that service which is also conflict. "Joshua rose early in the morning." (Ver. 12.) "They rose early, about the dawning of the day." (Ver. 15.) See how zeal in one provokes and encourages it in others; but we shall come to this again. In short we see that it is God alone who obtains the victory, though at the same time associating us with Christ in it. Of what use would weapons of warfare have been against Jericho? None whatever, God does it all. He desires that the power and victory

should come entirely from Him, and be without any mixture of human importance.

Generally when it is a question of fighting, Christians are ready to admit that the power is of God, but they do not consent to the absolute exclusion of self, and the consequence is that they are not rewarded by a complete victory as at Jericho, where God claimed this honour for *Himself*; not that He refused human instrumentality, but it must be He who makes use of it, so that man may not be exalted in his own eyes. We do well to note God's way of action. He chooses instruments without strength or value in themselves, or else, if they are worth something in the eyes of men, He begins by smashing them as He did with Saul of Tarsus; then He says: "He is a chosen vessel unto me." Now I can use you.

We have already noticed that the manner of action of Christians during conflict is too often exactly the opposite to that of God. They put their means and resources in the foreground. "We have formed an excellent plan; we are well organised; we have a superior staff of evangelists, and we send forth our emissaries into the four quarters of the globe." Dear friends, I am not inventing; every day one hears and reads such things; you and I have perhaps expressed ourselves in these terms before now. If we look at man's work we shall always see this deplorable mistake.

Had Israel said : Very well, let the power be God's, but let us combine to find the means wherewith to overthrow the walls of Jericho ; what would have happened on the seventh day ? Not a single stone of the wall would have fallen !

But here the power of the enemy gives way, and the people destroy the accursed city. More than this, their faith and activity in testimony and victory set other souls at liberty, as will always be the result when we engage in the Lord's battles. Rahab, still a prisoner, is delivered and brought into the midst of God's people, where she can henceforth enjoy the same privileges as the victors.

One more detail I would call your attention to. Faith makes no compromise with the world, receives and takes nothing from it. God forbids the people to touch the spoil of Jericho ; it is accursed. Jehovah can claim these things and glorify Himself by them ; they belong to Him, but not to the children of Israel, who can only touch them to put them into "the treasury of the house of the Lord."

Such is the fight of faith. May God give us to go over these things in our hearts, so as not to be vanquished in our contest with the enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

AI AND THE ACCURSED THING.

WE have just been considering the brilliant picture of a divine victory obtained by faith over Satan. After such a conquest, we say, Israel will surely proceed from one victory to another; but not so. Chapter vii. opens with the registry of a defeat. A little town, an insignificant obstacle in comparison with Jericho, and "few people" are enough to put to flight three thousand men of Israel, and to cause the hearts of the people to melt and become as water.

There are secrets of defeat as there are secrets of victory, and the believer's chief danger lies in victory. After having gained it in real dependence upon God, the soul, if occupied with the results, willingly attributes something to itself, and the next defeat dates from that moment.

Notice the case of Joshua: "Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai." (Ver. ii.) He repeats what he had done in chapter ii. 1 with regard to the land and Jericho. Then it was the path of God, but now the very same act becomes a human and fleshly expedient. The spies had returned from reconnoitring Jericho saying: "Truly the Lord hath delivered into our hands all the land." What need then to send further emissaries? It

was in some measure a lack of dependence on God, a confidence in human means.

More than this, Joshua sent them "from Jericho," which is not the true point of departure; he forgets Gilgal, where they learnt what the flesh is, or perhaps he does not yet know that it is the place to which they must return. Joshua had found in the victory an opportunity for trusting in the flesh. He, who until now, had been a type of Christ by His Spirit acting in the believer, so as to bring him into possession of his privileges, descends to the level of an ordinary man. The typical Joshua disappears, to make room for Joshua as a man.

Is it not often so with us? Every believer in his measure is a representative of Christ, an epistle intended to make Him known, which, directly we forget Gilgal, disappears to give place to the old man which we have neglected to judge.

But the people, alas! follow the example of their leader. The men sent by Joshua having returned, said unto him: "Let not all the people go up; but let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai; and make not all the people to labour thither, for they are but few." (Ver. 3.) They have the most implicit confidence in themselves; they will "smite Ai." What is it for *us* and *our* men of war? Have we not shewn our capability at Jericho? Dangerous confidence!

But there is not only this lack of dependence on God, and self-confidence, the fruit of unjudged flesh ; there is more ; coveted things, hidden from every eye, are buried in the earth in the midst of a tent ; the *accursed thing* is there.

God had cursed the town of Jericho ; all that belonged to it was under the curse ; no one dared keep any of it lest he should make himself and the camp of Israel accursed. (Chap. vi. 18.) One man only had disobeyed, and hearkening to his lusts, had stolen of the accursed thing. Which of us is free in heart from this ?

This man had followed his natural inclinations, he had begun where we all begin, where the first man began. "I saw." (Ver. 21.) "When the woman saw" is said in Genesis iii. 6. He had eyes which knew how to discern the goodly things amongst the spoil. His eyes were the avenue to his heart, but there was no sentinel to watch, no "qui vive" to resound in case of an attack. It is through the eyes that the accursed thing takes possession of the heart, and provokes it to lust : "I coveted them." "Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin : " "I took them." The goodly Babylonish garment which could adorn the pride of life, the silver and gold which could satisfy every lust, became the prey of Achan ; nay rather, these things make *him* their prey ! Fatal and Satanic chain which links the world to man's natural heart, in order

to make him the sport of the prince of this world.

Notice now how the sin of one man has to do with all Israel. (Ver. 1.) “But *the children of Israel* committed a trespass in the accursed thing . . . and the anger of the Lord was kindled against *the children of Israel.*” The people might have said: Does that concern us? How could we have known about a hidden thing, and not having known it, how are we responsible? To all that we reply, that God always has the unity of His people before His eyes. He considers individuals as members of one whole, and responsible the one for the other. The suffering and sin of one is the suffering and sin of all, and if it is thus with Israel, how much more so with us, the church of God, one body united by the Holy Spirit to the Head which is in heaven.

If, however, their souls had been in a good state, God would have manifested the hidden evil in their midst. The power of an ungrieved Spirit in the assembly brings to light all that dishonours Christ amongst His own. The reason it was not so with Israel, was that there was something unjudged in the people and their leader. The hidden evil of Achan is the means of bringing out the hidden evil in the heart of the people. When the assembly is in a good state, although always answerable for the sin of one of its members, it is made aware of it by the

Holy Spirit, and finds itself in a position to put away the evil from its midst, and, as the case may be, to put out the wicked person.* It was thus in the early days of the church, in the case of the cutting off of Ananias and Sapphira; the power of the Spirit of God discovered and judged the evil immediately. But here in Israel, hearts had to be brought by self-judgment to bear the sin of one as the sin of all before God.

Is it thus with us in these days of ruin? Do we feel the evil in the church? Do we recognise our responsibility as to all the corruption which has been introduced? Or are we self-confident enough, in presence of the rubbish, to think that we could do better than others, and that the ruin of the church is not our doing? If our hearts are not habitually thus before God, we are sectarian; and, more than this, we may have to be reminded by a terrible defeat of the humility which becomes those who ought to have remained at Gilgal. See how differently from our miserable hearts God judges. He says: "*Israel* hath sinned, and *they* have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded *them*: for *they* have even

* See Deuteronomy xiii. 5; xix. 19; xxi. 18, 21; xxiv. 7; 1 Cor. v. 13. It is well to observe that the cases where a man may be designated as a wicked person are not all specified in the word of God. No mention is made of a murderer, &c. The judgment being left to the spirituality of the assembly.

taken of the accursed thing ; and have also stolen and dissembled also, and *they* have put it even among *their* own stuff." (Ver. 11.)

In verses 5 and 6 we find the chastisement of the people. Three thousand men of Israel flee before Ai ; and the hearts of the people melt and become like water because thirty-six of them are smitten. They are prostrate ; strength and energy fail them ; fear takes possession of their souls, for their courage has been carnal. So proud of their previous victory, they fall now to the level of the Amorites whose "hearts melted" when they heard of the crossing of Jordan. This was a sad but necessary experience, for they had forgotten Gilgal ; and Satan undertakes to teach them through the bitterness of a defeat, what amount of strength they possess, and how much confidence can be placed in the flesh. Ah ! if they had been with God they would have been preserved from a defeat, as we see very remarkably in the apostle Paul's experience. He had been triumphantly caught up to the third heavens, into paradise, and there he had heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter, but when he came down again to the earth, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, was given to buffet him. The flesh was in him, and would have exalted itself, but God anticipates it and hinders His beloved servant from being puffed up.

The danger was great, for had he listened to the flesh, how many flattering things he would have said to himself in consequence of this wonderful vision, thus compromising not only his peace, but even his apostleship and his course. But God takes care of His servant, giving him the necessary corrective, in order that the course of his victories may be uninterrupted. Paul learns by "the thorn," which is his Gilgal, that the flesh, even the best, is worth nothing. God says to him: Never mind the infirmity—the thorn in the flesh; stay at Gilgal, it is precisely what you need, for in this way the *power* will be entirely mine and will obtain the victory; and as for thee, my *grace* is sufficient! It was a place of suffering and humiliation for Paul, but of wondrous blessing! He was with God, in communion with the Lord, and the messenger of Satan is but the means of keeping him at Gilgal, and not of bringing him back there by a defeat.

(T. R.)

(*To be continued.*)

SINS AFTER CONVERSION.

FAITH in the blood of Christ shelters me from the judgment, as Israel was safe from the destroyer because of the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the door-post. The worshipper, once purged, has no more conscience of sins. Judgment because of sins is passed over for ever. The blood has acquired for us this new footing: "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" therefore there is no more offering for sin. Israel left Egypt under the shelter of the blood. That shelter could never cease; they are a redeemed people. The believer now is placed in an entirely new standing, because of the blood of Christ. He is our mercy-seat, in whom is concentrated the full revelation of God, according to His power and glory. He is that ever for us, through faith in His blood. There is no more shedding of blood. By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

This being accepted and held to in faith, there comes the question, What about the sins after conversion? It will not be asserted that there are none. True it is, that earnest souls have

tried to escape from the sorrow and shame of sinning after conversion, by assuming and attempting to reach a state of sinless perfection. In this case, always, there is a lowering of the sense of holiness, in order to relieve the conscience of the sense of sin. It is like damaging one's sight, so as to have an excuse for not seeing.

The truth is, that, on believing in Christ, we are, through God's grace, on entirely new ground, ever under the shelter of His blood, and, once purged, "there is no more conscience of sins." God, in His perfect grace, has not only forgiven our sins, but He has terminated judicially in the cross the old man, from whence the sins come. In the life of Christ we are "free from the law of sin and death." If we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, for the Spirit is stronger than the flesh. When the believer sins, he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. "The thought of foolishness is sin."

We have boldness for entering into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, where we enjoy the sense of being without a spot. Now, when we are defiled, when a spot occurs, however small it may be, there is a return to the flesh. We have returned to what God has set aside in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are sensible of the defilement, for communion is interrupted; there

is no enjoyment of the place or the part where Christ is. I need not say here that, of course, you must have known and enjoyed this place of nearness before you could lose it, or before you would seek restoration. I am supposing the case of "the worshipper once purged;" he has tasted of the ineffable blessedness of being in the holiest; his heart was sprinkled from an evil conscience, and his body washed with pure water. But he has lost it; he has been "drawn away of his own lust, and enticed;" he is sensible of his loss. The greater his love for the Lord, the more he feels it; for affection is not communion, but affection makes one long for what can only satisfy itself. Peter had affection, and had tasted of the Saviour's love, before he was restored to communion.

The course of grace now is, as in his case, that the feet are washed. It is not merely forgiveness, though that is included or connected with the washing. The forgiveness does not refer in any way to the safety of the soul, because God does not impute sin to any one under the shelter of the blood of Christ; and yet with God, always, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; sin is of the devil. The washing is not in any sense a propitiation. The washing is to expose the root, or source, of the sin, and thus to free the believer of its working and defilement. It is the light of the word exposing the evil by substituting the

good. This is done by the word, through the Spirit searching our conscience, often in much distress and confession; the latter (confession) because Jesus is our Advocate. The flesh having been judicially terminated in the cross, were it not for the advocacy of Christ, a returning to it in the believer would entail on him immediate excision from the life here.

Now, when the word has exposed to me the root of the sin which I have committed, I am in practical abhorrence of it; and the Spirit relieves me, by presenting to me what the ashes of the red heifer in the running water (see Num. xix.) typify: namely, that Christ bore the judgment of God for my failure. It is not fire now, but ashes, the token of accomplished judgment.

The effect on me of the washing, is, that I am cleared of the *source* of the sin; the root from which it came has been disclosed; the spot is gone, because the root is judged. "If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But, being judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Flesh must go wherever it is; we are not to be condemned with the world, but if we do not judge ourselves, we are judged of the Lord; hence it is, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." That is, there are cases when the works of the flesh are not forgiven;

the flesh suffers here because it has not been judged. The flesh cannot be tolerated, and the more godly we are, the less can we tolerate it, or the more quickly is it judged. Real liberty is walking in the Spirit; for if I walk by the Spirit, I mortify the deeds of the body. The true course, is, as "Marah" typifies, that I refuse everything for which Christ died; this is my real freedom. Hence, the man who has the greatest opportunity of gratifying himself, is the one who most distinctly feels that this is indeed a wilderness, where he cannot enjoy what he possesses, and what would so minister to him as a man.

Now it is evident that sickness may fall on us here because of sins that we have not judged; that is, that God will, in some way, silence the flesh in the activity in which it has exposed itself, unless it is judged. When it is judged, it is disallowed, and here real repentance comes in. Thus "godly sorrow works repentance." "I repent in dust and ashes." I loathe myself, and my one relief is to see myself crucified with Christ, and thus the flesh as far from me as, through grace, it is from God. Hence it is, that, when one is sick, it is said (James v. 16), "and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Up to that moment they had not been forgiven him, and this forgiveness related exclusively to his sickness.

I do not say that every sickness is because of sin, for I read about one being "sick, nigh unto death, for the work of the Lord;" again, a man may have inherited a weakly constitution; or may have shattered his health before his conversion. In this case I suffer the consequences of my unrighteousness after I am converted. The thief on the cross, though going to paradise, dies a felon's death. And constantly, in the Old Testament, the expression occurs, "and it shall be forgiven him." This does not relate to future, but to present, things. There are instances when there is not present forgiveness. This I have adduced; and again (1 John v. 16): "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Well, now that we have seen that the flesh must be practically set aside in the believer, let us examine briefly the difference between the discipline to promote holiness, and the discipline because of unholiness. I do not see how any one can determine for another which of the two he may be passing through. It is evident that the more any one walks in self-surrender, the better he understands in himself the cross, the the more he enjoys the Lord. And it is often because saints will not deny themselves that they pass through human sufferings; as it was said to Israel, in connection with "Marah" (Ex. xv. 26): "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of

the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

We all have to learn, when it is not at all a matter of sinfulness, that the less the flesh is given a place, the more of the power of Christ we have. This Paul learned when he came down from the third heaven, so that he can say, "I take pleasure in infirmities . . . that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It is thus the apostle can say, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus;" nothing for which He suffered is to be allowed in me, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body."

Then follows, "we who live are always delivered unto death, for Jesus' sake." No doubt it was persecution in that day, for it checked and cut down the flesh; but very often, now, sickness is sent to produce what persecutions effected then. I can understand how when one is suffering sickness, instead of persecution, one becomes sensible of being made more practically fit for the service that one has at heart. When a believer dreads any tendency of his nature, when he "looks not at the wine when it is red," the Lord comes in to assist him, by bringing in death, in some way. For instance, if he has

a love for music, by spoiling his ear ; but in such cases the heart is always conscious of favour in the discipline, and not of rebuke. It is a very different thing when there is rebuke for self-gratification, to what it is when the self-surrender begins with oneself, and the Lord rolls in death, to confirm and establish the longing of the true heart ; like the man who determined to give up his jewelry for the Lord, and when he had done so, a burglar broke into the house, and stole it. He was not sorry for the loss, but he was kept up to his desire by the Lord.

On the other hand, if any goes on gratifying the flesh, sooner or later his sufferings will spring from his gratification, just as Sodom became suffering to Lot. While, as with Isaac in Gerar, he not only reached Rehoboth, but, when he came to Beer-Sheba, the Lord appeared to him *that night*. The Lord not only makes me glad of the surrender, but He more than compensates in Himself for any loss on my side : "a hundredfold more in this present time."

Thus I have endeavoured to open out a little this interesting subject, assured that we do not sufficiently seek light from the Lord as to the bodily sufferings to which we are subjected. As I have already said, I do not think that one can interpret for another, but I am sure, that, if there were more exercise before the Lord because of our afflictions, we all should bear them

better, and derive real blessing from them. Surely, when any one is rendered thoroughly incapable here in mind or body, there must be something in it of the rebuke to Lot's wife, when turned into a pillar of salt. The Lord is full of compassion, and often one is allowed to go on in a carnal way for a long time, because one has no sense of the evil in one's conscience; but, assuredly, the day must come when all that selfishness will pass away by the stroke of His hand: "Our God is a consuming fire."

J. B. S.

THE thought that God may be honoured, transforms a human being, and human life, and everything connected with it, into value immeasurable.

(G. V. W.)

READINGS ON PHILIPPIANS.

CHAPTERS III., IV.

(Continued from page 217.)

“FOR the rest, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord,” and (chap. iv.) “Stand fast in the Lord, beloved.” “Rejoice in the Lord always: again, I will say, Rejoice.” The key-notes for a song in the wilderness:

“Rejoice in Him, again, again,
The Spirit speaks the word,”

“Stand fast in Christ, ah, yet again,
He teacheth all the band.”

We may compare this with a former word of encouragement given while the people were in the wilderness: “Moses my servant is dead; now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan.” “Be strong, and of a good courage:” “I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” Again, ah, yet again, God speaks the word: “only be thou strong and very courageous.” “Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage.” (Josh. i. 6, 7, 9.)

Thus spake the God of all encouragement, when announcing the death of His servant Moses. Here it is the Spirit of Christ, in His servant

Paul, encouraging the saints to rejoice in the Lord.

These words, we well know, were but the fruit of the joy poured by the Spirit of Jesus Christ into the heart of His prisoner, and what so fitting channel on earth as the heart of that prisoner of Jesus Christ for the nations? The circumstance of his position, his prison-house and chain, were far from being hindrances to joy in the Lord. And what were those of Christ when He said: "That my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full"? This kind of joy, blessed be God, is independent of earthly circumstances, though realised in their midst, and our strength therein.

But "beware," he says, "of dogs [shameless ones], evil workmen;" the secret of the Lord is not with such. It is only the "circumcision" who boast in Christ Jesus; the answer in them to God's boasting in heaven, when, having brought Him from the dead, He gave Him the great name above all creature names, a position, as Man glorified, which claimed universal homage. Yet this is far from being the fulness of the divine mind concerning Him. The blessed and only Ruler, King of kings and Lord of lords, is going to shew the "appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Father *has* glorified Him with Himself. Boasting in Christ Jesus is the mind of God Himself in the saints.

It has just been remarked that having the mind of Christ—this mind which was in Christ—is the secret of power; but the same may be said of this joy in the Lord; we shall presently see how this comes out.

But what a blessed description of our practical state under the term “circumcision:” (and how blessedly and wondrously he illustrates it in his own spiritual history!) “worshipping by the Spirit of God, boasting in Christ Jesus,” all confidence in the flesh for ever gone.

It reminds one of another scripture in 1 John i. 7, which presents a different but equally precious aspect of our state and standing. “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” There we have a blending of both standing and state. We Christians are in the light as He is in the light; clouds and darkness are not found in this revelation of God; darkness is no longer His secret place (Ps. xviii.), He is in the light, but we are walking in it; where else could we walk? (he goes on to add, “The darkness is past,” or “passing.”) And see the blessed result, “we have fellowship one with another,” and the blood of Jesus Christ is of unchanged and unchangeable efficacy. This is said here in connection with our walking in the light.

What a roll of blessings these two passages

bring before us! We walk in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship with one another; we worship by the Spirit of God; we boast in Christ Jesus; and we have lost all confidence in the flesh; henceforth it is the Lord who possesses our confidence.

All this is very blessed, and it is easy to see that the Lord Jesus is the centre and immediate object before the soul of the apostle. It is no longer a question of the mind that was in Him being in us now, but of being with Him where He is, having Himself there as the soul's exceeding great and eternal gain. This is the one thought here, supreme and governing, before which all the thoughts of the flesh disappear. What possible connection could there be between a Hebrew of the Hebrews and the glorified Man in heaven?

This Hebrew was of the former things, the old creation and the first man; Christ was the second Man out of heaven, and gone on high, the Head there of the new creation. Could you speak now of circumcision or of uncircumcision in any relation to Him? These were former things, and are nothing now, the apostle states elsewhere; but "in Christ," is new creation. (Galatians.) Again, in the thought of the "new man," the names "Jew" and "Greek" &c., have disappeared, and only that of Christ is found, as in the words of Colossians iii. "Christ is all."

I think the apostle was full of this thought when he says here, "My Lord!" My Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; the answer of his heart to the purpose of God the Father, that every tongue should confess Him Lord, to God the Father's glory. With like readiness he expresses his sympathy with others in their wants by: "*My God* shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." The chain of the prisoner had not weakened the confidence of the saint; he knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded He was able to keep for that day what he had entrusted to Him. He had many interests connected with that day. We may not know what the "deposit" was, but we do know there was that which would be a boast and crown and joy for him when that day came.

It is evident that he lived much in spirit with the Lord, much in His coming day, making little account of the judgment of man's day; of this kind of life how much, or how *little* do we know? The things before are not in view, while the things behind, in a religious and social aspect, are what Christians seem to be for the most part "reaching after." Their labours are chiefly directed to the advancement politically, socially, and morally, of this present evil world; to modify, as far as may be, peradventure to remove altogether, the reproach of the cross. Many thus

prove themselves to be its enemies, their professions notwithstanding.

Could Paul, who said, "God forbid that I should boast, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world and the world unto me," be of that company? He was a fanatic in their eyes in saying it; at least he was the true servant of Him whom he called "my Lord;" bearing in his body the brands of the Lord Jesus. But when these professors come to this passage, they are silent for the most part, in the silence of spiritual death.

It can hardly fail to be noticed, that, in this most interesting chapter, we have again before us, one emptied, not as in the preceding chapter, in the power of divine grace to man, but here through grace given to man: not the Son of man out of heaven, but one who had been of earth, taken possession of by Jesus Christ for heaven, and glory with Himself there.

The fulness of Saul of Tarsus had been what might be termed the fulness of the flesh; in principle, all that it most glories in; what the man in the flesh had counted gain to him was there. There was nothing to be desired in respect of race, tribe, or nationality, circumcision, law, zeal, or righteousness of his own. There was a seven-fold completeness in this gain to him, which gave him his place and standing before men. He was an important personage there, a Jew of Tarsus,

a citizen of no mean city, a Roman also, educated according to the exactness of the law, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Such were the varied and splendid advantages which the man in the flesh counted gain to him.

But, as he was drawing near to Damascus, about midday there shone out of heaven a great light round about him, when he fell to the ground, having heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To the query, "Who art thou, Lord?" came the answer, "I am Jesus the Nazaræan, whom thou persecutest." That voice has reached his inmost soul. It pleased God to reveal His Son in him; in a moment all is changed! He refuses to take counsel with flesh and blood; all that constituted the gain of Saul of Tarsus fell to the ground with him. He understands it now.

But this was the voice of One, not "out of the earth," but "out of heaven" (New Trans.), the second Man. "Such as he" (Adam), "made of dust, such are they also made of dust" (hitherto that had been his state); "and such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones" (henceforth this is to be Paul's state). The Man of heaven announces Himself to him who was of the earth, as "Jesus the Nazaræan, whom thou persecutest."

Was it to this goal, that the advantages, already detailed, had led the man of the earth—

open hatred and persecution of the Nazaræan, now speaking from that light, the glory of which rendered Saul sightless? What affinity then had these privileges of his earthly position with that place of light and glory of which Jesus the Nazaræan was the centre? They were but the strength of that enmity in which he raged against the name of Jesus; even as the law itself is the strength of sin.

But the voice from heaven has reached him. The God who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by His grace, and was pleased to reveal His Son in him, has begun a good work in him. The starting-point of this chief of sinners, in his new and wondrous career, was Jesus glorified on high. Of what he then saw, and of what this voice conveyed—Jesus glorified, one with His suffering saints—he was to be a witness. Henceforth his heart, unwearied, will never suffer him to rest until he has gained Him in that glory from which His voice had reached him.

It is no question here of soul salvation; but oh, how unlike everything that one sees or hears of! The subject is not one of doctrines or divine reasonings, yet who was more used in these lines than Paul? It is the history of a whole heart for ever won, and henceforth for ever to be engaged with one supreme object, in the affections and thoughts of a new nature, of which

the Holy Spirit was the strength; for in Him, and in Him alone, were concentrated all the counsels, all the promises, all the mercies of God towards man: His beloved Son, in whom was all His delight—God had highly exalted Him, and here was the least of all saints, exclaiming: My Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and whom I have alone before me in His place on high for mine eternal and unspeakable gain!

Was not this, so far, fellowship with God? the expression of His mind in His servant at any rate. God's appreciation of His holy servant Jesus was shewn in setting Him over all; the least of all saints shewed his appreciation, in suffering for Him the loss of all things.

Now what place in the unsearchable riches of Christ had the privileges of race, and nation, and circumcision, advantages social, moral, or carnally religious? These were the riches of the man out of the earth, but such was Paul no longer: grace and divine power had changed all that. Such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones, and of these was Paul.

It was remarked before, that this is not the place to look for doctrines and reasonings, and yet the chapter is full of both; but they are the doctrines and reasonings of a heart full of Christ, and led by His Spirit in giving them forth. Is there no doctrine in: "What things were gain to

me, these I counted, on account of Christ, but loss"? Is not this the calculation of right reason in the highest sense; a reasonable thought, as elsewhere he speaks of a "reasonable service"? Yet the words express the *emotion* of a heart drawn in the deepest way towards its divine and heavenly object.

But these reasonings of the affections, when in spirit before God, were, so far as he was really there, the reasonings of the Spirit of Christ, and it is a solemn thing to be allowed to hear them. "What things were to me gain, these I *counted*, on account of Christ, loss." "But surely I *count* also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." "I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ." That which could not be found in the second Man out of heaven, or connected with Him, was rejected by Paul, or regarded by him with utter contempt.

Here then we have another man; not the Man out of heaven, but one of those who are such as the heavenly One, and find again in *measure* the same characteristics: emptied, humbled, and obedient. All of self seems to have disappeared; lost in the all-subduing energy of spirit in which he cast aside all that reminded him of the things behind, pressing ever onward towards his one and only object.

Yet was he ever full of interest in the things

and persons in the midst of which his pathway lay; but they were solely Christ's interests on earth, the kingdom and house and testimonies of God, the souls He had quickened, labouring amongst them and preaching the gospel to every creature which is under heaven. But this was work by the way; his object was Christ in the glory of God; his path led straight as an arrow to that divine goal. From that he never swerved. Who else of the children of men ever addressed his brethren in terms like these? "Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus, as you have us for a model." What a wonderful path for man on earth! a path whose moral heights the creature had not before contemplated. With what interest we fix our eyes, not only on the new position, but on the new man; who, understanding its meaning, walked at its height, sustained by the power which took man in the person of Christ, and set Him in glory on high, Head of the new creation.

Now let us look at the position in relation to the wilderness path; for we are not sitting in heavenly places here as in Ephesians. Thus then the position in the wilderness is developed, old things passed away, former things forgotten, the things before not yet reached, while all around is enmity and moral death, the blessings as yet unseen, and known only by faith; for now was

the judgment of this world, Christ not yet gained, that is, Christ where He is, glorified on high; eternal life a hope, as in Titus i. In a word, all the blessings, which replaced the old things passed away, are regarded here (characterising the salvation) as gained or possessed at the end, the result of blest ways and energies in the wilderness.

These blessings, beginning with Christ Himself, are also seven in number, as were the old privileges in the flesh. To gain Christ; to be found in Him; to have the righteousness of God; to know Him; to know the power of His resurrection; to know the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; to attain by any means unto the resurrection from among the dead. All this would be the glorious result of working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, and belongs to Christian responsibility.

In another aspect, we receive eternal life when we believe, as it is written: "In whom ye also have trusted, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the acquired possession, to the praise of his glory." The acquired possession is what the saints inherit with Christ. Thus Christ Himself, with salvation and the Holy Spirit as *its* seal, and as earnest of

our inheritance, characterise our present position. As to his position in the wilderness, through which his pathway led, Paul could not say that he was already perfected. He had not attained to the resurrection from among the dead (the power that wrought in that resurrection he realised much of), he had not *gained* Christ, was not with Him in His glory; how then could he say he was perfected?

Yet, in speaking thus, he places himself, according to his own teaching, amongst the perfect or full-grown. It was not a babe, needing milk, that desired to be with Christ in glory, to gain Him there. "Let us be thus minded (think this)," he adds, addressing the full-grown (perfect); yet not forgetting those otherwise minded, God would reveal it unto them.

It will be well to compare his state here with that of the rich man in Mark x. He runs to Jesus, kneels to Him, and asks Him, as "good teacher," what he should do to inherit eternal life. What zeal, and freshness, and beauty, and righteousness, too! but it was all *his own!* not found in Christ, indeed all was his own as much as his riches. The only real advantage he received from them was in this, that they helped him in the discovery that all was vanity: eternal life alone was not *that*. Yet, after all, the present possession of wealth was practically more important to him than life eternal; it formed the

chain that bound him to earth, and was the only treasure his heart knew of. "Treasure in heaven," was a *dark* saying; to sell what he had, take up his cross, and follow the Good Teacher in His lonely path, was a *hard* one, too hard for him to listen to. His soul's present immediate want was salvation, but his own death in sins, and powerless estate as a lost sinner he was ignorant of. Riches and the good things of this life harden the heart and sear the conscience, hence the needed testing words: "Sell what thou hast, take up thy cross, and follow me." His alacrity in coming to Jesus is turned into sadness: "at the word" he went away grieving; his assumed competency "to do" was a vanity, like everything else of man.

Compare this with Paul's, "My Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ." Paul, from the beginning, had his treasure in heaven, and where that was, there was his heart also; the rich man wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life; he has no thought of finding it in the Good Teacher, no thought that he is already a lost sinner, "without strength."

Now what thought had Paul of life or righteousness, strength, salvation, or glory, or aught that is of God, and not vanity, apart from Christ? The grace, mercy, promises, and counsels of God, he found in Him. His Person rose gloriously above all that which He could bestow upon man,

and to be with Himself (for ever with the Lord) was, for Paul's heart, the chiefest of all that for which he was apprehended. When he said at his conversion, "What shall I do, Lord?" it was not in the view of inheriting anything by his *doings*; what he had seen and heard had put an end for ever to all such thoughts. "For this purpose have I appeared unto thee," said the Lord, "to appoint thee to be a servant and a witness, both of what thou hast seen, and of what I shall appear to thee in." It was the right word for the servant, "What shall I do, Lord?" He "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." It is true, there was a doing on his part, and that of a most peculiar kind: "But one thing," he says, and then it comes out that for Paul the present consisted in forgetting the past (the things behind), and stretching out to the things before, pursuing for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ. Such was the course he was running.

It may well be questioned whether such a present had ever been realised by man before, such a race run! The absence will be remarked of all effort to improve or change, or act in any way upon the scene he was passing through; it formed no part of his divine commission. (Acts xxii.) Christ had given Himself for our sins, that He should deliver us out of this present evil world. He overcame the world, and all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over it also.

I know that this kind of testimony torments those that "dwell upon the earth"—to be told that they who refuse to be its overcomers will be found and judged as among its corrupters. But any such refusal on the part of Paul would have falsified his relative position towards it. By the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ he was crucified unto the world, and the world unto him. Those who do not know what this means, much less feel its power, are hardly to be blamed if they refuse to recognise in Paul a model for their Christian walk (and ways); only why call it *Christian* in this case? The enemies of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who mind earthly things he classes together.

But Paul had been delivered, spiritually, from this evil world: "Taking thee out from among the people (the Jews), and the nations, to whom now I send thee," forms part of the Lord's address to him. He that had said to him, "Arise, and *stand on thy feet*," had also appeared unto him that he might *see*, and be *filled with the Holy Ghost*. These three things mark his new position: set on his feet by Christ, seeing by the gift of Christ, and filled with the Holy Ghost. Thus even his body is full of light.

The spirit of intelligence, by which he was thus distinguished, was not the intelligence of Saul of Tarsus, neither was it of, by, or from, man. The scales now fallen from his eyes, he contemplates

the world through the medium of the cross, and can find nothing in it but that which put Jesus there; it was thus he measured this world. The Lord must be everything to him who can use such a measure as this.

John has another measure for it; but one equally perfect: "All that is in the world . . . is not of the *Father*," therefore we are not to love it nor the things that are in it: we cannot love the Father, and at the same time, the things that are in the world, any more than we can talk of citizenship in heaven, while we mind earthly things. "Boast" in the cross, and "love of the Father," unite in condemning the world, quite as much as Noah's faith did. The Lord had already pronounced its judgment (John xii.), and left it out in His prayer. (John xvii.)

The wise preacher had no such measure: neither the Father nor the Son (in these relationships) were known to him; yet he, too, had taken note of all that was in it; he could not say that it was not of the Father, but simply declares that all that was in it was only vanity and vexation of spirit. Such was the rule by which *he* measured the world he was surveying: "Vanity and vexation of spirit."

No such words as these ever broke forth from the lips of the prisoner of Jesus Christ. In their stead we have: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I will say, Rejoice." Moses

never encouraged the people with words like these. They had seen the glory and the greatness, but where was the grace? But now these could not be contemplated by the believer apart from the grace; they were now seen united in divinest harmony: the greatness, the glory, and the grace of God. This, when fully understood, was told out in the voice from the glory. God had been glorified in man, even in relation to sin, and where sin was; and now man was glorified with God, where sin could not come.

Well might the heart of Paul burn within him, as filled with the Holy Spirit, he comprehended the meaning and bearing of what he had seen and heard, his wondrous mission, and the things in which Christ appeared unto him. Poor, blessed, wondering Paul, what could he say or think! His whole heart was won; Christ had gained him for Himself, an elect vessel indeed, to bear His name before both nations and kings, and the sons of Israel. How often, as he went on in his service, his full heart must have found relief in utterances like these: "My Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things;" and "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" how often bent the knee, whilst he prayed that the Christ he loved might dwell in his heart by faith!

It is very clear that the world has lost its power over the soul of one who can say, "It is

crucified unto me." Object or interest in it, save those which were Christ's, Paul had no longer. His pathway out of it was a path of service, it is true, and there was no lingering by the way. When it pleased God, who called him by His grace, to reveal His Son in him, that he might announce Him as glad tidings among the nations, immediately he did not take counsel with flesh and blood; no, he only took counsel with God. It seems to have been a solitary journey into Arabia. Glorious solitude, where God is known as our everlasting portion! But he has in spirit left the world, not on the ground of its being corrupted, or only on the authority of such a word as: "Depart ye, this is not your rest, for it is polluted." Far other and deeper motives wrought in the spirit of Paul. In the light of the glory he had found Jesus of Nazareth; in His cross his own death to sin, law, and the world itself. (Rom. vi., vii.; Gal. vi.) What was the world now to him? He forsakes it in all the liberty of a soul divinely and for ever freed.

In Romans viii. we have him celebrating God's victory over a greater than Pharaoh. What the law could not do, God had done: He had condemned sin in the flesh. In the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, he realised deliverance from the law of sin and death. No such deliverance was celebrated on the shores of the Red Sea! no such occasion for praise ever known amongst men! He

forsook the world for the highest of all prizes, in the liberty and power of a soul thus divinely freed.

But this is Christianity. Philippians iii. gives us the new man (*καινός*), walking according to its spirit and privileges, and shewing us the way out of this world to Christ in the glory on high. In the next chapter we see how he bore himself in relation to surrounding circumstances. He was the "creature" of none of them; master, through Christ, everywhere; he had learned to be satisfied in himself (for Christ was there); had strength for all things in Him that gave him power. What he had learned, what he loved, followed after, hoped or feared, his sorrows and his consolations, were all for the service and encouragement of the saints he so truly loved; by grace he shared in Christ's interests in them.

He reminds one of the eagle stirring up her nest, fluttering over her young, spreading abroad her wings, taking them, bearing them on her wings. From the lofty heights in which his spirit dwelt (the prison house was no hindrance here) he could swoop down to the weak or falling; then, spreading abroad his wings, take them, and, bearing them on his wings, mount up to those wondrous heights, not strange to him, though little known to them, and shew them how to behold with steadfast gaze the light of glory as it shone in the "unveiled face."

See the figures he employs himself in 1 Thessalonians ii. "We have been gentle in the midst of you, as a *nurse* would cherish her own children. Thus, yearning over you, we had found our delight in having imparted to you not only the glad tidings of God, but our own lives also, because ye had become beloved of us As ye know how, as a *father* his own children, we used to exhort each one of you, and comfort and testify, that ye should walk worthy of God, who calls us to his own kingdom and glory."

CHAPTER IV.

"This world is a wilderness wide."

PAUL, as no one else, could have sung that song of the wilderness. Would he not also have led in the songs of the Lord, in the spirit of 2 Chronicles xxix. 27? "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also." No inspired writer in the New Testament has spoken of Christ offering Himself in that character, and of His acceptance on high, as Paul has. "The Christ loved us, and delivered himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." His spirit appreciated that

aspect of the offering of Christ. Thoughts, too, of Canaan's long-loved dwelling must have often made his heart tuneful; more than once or twice, in our day, they issued in song in one like-minded, whose heart was much there, who *minded* the things above.

“When to Canaan's long-loved dwelling
Love divine thy foot shall bring;
There, with shouts of triumph swelling,
Zion's songs in rest to sing.”

We should like to have received, through the hands of our first Christian brethren, of Paul's day, some of their early songs, the heart's first, fresh overflowings; but what caused them remains, and that is far better. The strings have been loosened sadly, from the length of the way; but the same wind from heaven still breathes through them, wakening up melody to Him who, entered into heaven, is in the presence of God for us. We are to “sing with our hearts to the Lord,” he tells us; “with grace in our hearts, to God.” (Eph. v.; Col. iii.)

Would he not have led in spirit in these divine songs?

No man ever passed through this world, according to the force of the expression, “in it, but not of it,” as Paul did, in the strength of that power that lifts us above it. We are but poor imitators of him here; but the Old Testament

saints could not walk in such a path; the goal for them was not the same, nor the starting-point either, and the power of the Spirit of Christ was wanting; not that they had not life (the new nature), but the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified, nor, indeed, come in flesh.

Abraham's beginning was a little like Paul's; the "God of glory" appeared unto him in Mesopotamia, as the "Lord of glory" (the Word that had become flesh) appeared unto Paul. Which was farthest from God? the idolater of Ur, or the devout Jew according to the flesh, the persecutor of Jesus the Nazaræan—Saul of Tarsus?

The beginning, in each case, was wholly and absolutely from above, from God, rich in mercy, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. The mighty word came to each (Gen. xv.; Acts ix.); the effect was similar—the effect on the flesh, or nature of man, when God was bringing him into relationship with Himself. *It is judged.* The sun was going down when God made a covenant with him by sacrifice; then a horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham. It was during the brightness of the midday sun, outshone by the "glory of that light," that darkness came upon Saul, already fallen to the ground. Man, as he is, cannot stand there. When the Lord said, "Stand upon thy feet," it was a new creature who did so. Henceforth, whom had he in heaven

but Christ? and there was none upon earth that he desired beside Him.

When a soul is in earnest, Christ having been revealed to it, it wants (its first, its latest, and greatest of all wants) to know the Lord. Who is it who has just been saying, That I may know Him? Was it a babe, or one simple in knowledge? (2 Cor. xi. 6.) I fear we have not made much progress in this knowledge, and so the nations hear but little of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" in our day.

But times of trial and judgment are at hand, when, if the Lord tarry—to use the words of Daniel xii.—(which, however, properly refer to Jewish circumstances; but compare Matt. xxv.), many, now sleeping, morally, in the dust of the earth, will arise; there will be wise ones, too, who will know what to do. For when did He ever fail to answer the feeblest cry of the remnant of His people? "I will never, never forsake thee; never, no, never, leave thee behind." But, in one sense, the last days were already come, and here was one of the wise, or teachers, of those days, in immediate connection with the divine source of all knowledge. What he had learned, and received, and heard, and seen in Jesus, shone out through Paul, as through a transparent medium. He must have been conscious of this through the Holy Ghost, when addressing them, in verse 9; and when, in another

place, he says, "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ." It was a word of more than apostolic authority; he was himself in the truth and power of what he enjoined on others.

I do not know of any word that so reminds us of John viii. 28: ["I am] altogether that which I also say to you." (New Translation.) See the effect of this in Luke iv., where, in spite of themselves, they wondered at His word, characterised, even in their minds, by grace, power, and authority. His lowly outside position took nothing from the authority of His word, which was thereby only intensified.

The result of their doing what they saw in Paul, would be, that the "God of peace" would be with them. This is but the complement of that other blessed truth: that, in ceasing from mere human anxiety, and trusting Him with the secret of the heart's trouble, the "peace of God" Himself would guard their hearts and thoughts by Christ Jesus. He is fully conscious of the greatness of the thought, for he adds: "It surpasses every understanding."

I have put this question to myself: If Paul were here, and knew my spiritual state, could he say, "Abide in those things which you have learned, and of which you have been fully persuaded, knowing of whom you have learned them"? One might have to pass through some exercise of heart and conscience as to what

things one had really learned, and had full assurance of, knowing of whom we had learned them. It is only when we have learned and received the things which we have seen and heard that we possess them spiritually. We are then in the state to which the Lord refers, when He says, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given."

Again, as in the first chapter, he speaks of the circumstances through which he was passing, but never of himself as a creature of any circumstance; *that* is the state of those who refuse to walk with God. He who walks according to the course of this world, is carried down the stream from whence never did soul deliver itself. He who gave Himself for our sins is the alone Deliverer here; and Paul, who had praised God with singing in the dungeon at Philippi, is now telling the Philippians, from his prison-house at Rome, that the "peace of God which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus."

The circumstances were only a means of his learning to be satisfied in himself. Yes! for Christ was there, and it was He who gave him power, so that he had strength for all things.

Mark the vastness of the range, and the spirit in which he contemplates them: "In everything, and in all things, I am initiated, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in him

that gives me power." In that heart there was no place for the murmurs of the wilderness, and none are ever heard. May we, too, be initiated into this mystery of knowing how to meet all and every circumstance, satisfied in oneself. (Ver. 11, New Translation.) Dependence upon Christ is the measure of this new kind of satisfaction.

It will be remarked, that in this part he is speaking simply of himself in relation to the circumstances of ordinary human life. It was necessary to do so, as he had proposed himself as a model to all the saints at Philippi. But in the first chapter he looks at circumstances in exclusive connection with the glad tidings. They had turned out to the furtherance of the gospel; his bonds were known in the prætorium to be in Christ; and whether, as looked at outwardly, and as means in the enemy's hand, they portended death, or that he was still to continue, his only care was that the Lord should be magnified, whether by life or by death.

Let us look once more at the remarkable order and fulness of these exhortations; and then let us ask ourselves, what room or occasion is left, in one who accepts them, for that wretched unrest and vanity of mind to which even Christians are so often a prey. First, they were to rejoice always in the Lord, their mildness to be known unto all. He was near. To be careful for nothing, as in everything, by prayer and supplica-

tion, with thanksgiving, letting their requests be made known to God. Then he gives an outline of the character of the things which were to occupy their thoughts. All things true, and noble, and just; all things pure, amiable, and of good report; if there be any virtue, any praise; and, finally, the things they had learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, they were to do.

In all this we see nothing like the imposition of a law for sanctification. What we do find, is the apostle, through the Spirit, ministering to those born of God the things suitable to the nature they had from Him. Joy in Christ, confidence in God, occupation of heart with all that was noble, and excellent, and pure before God.

How their hearts must have burned when he interpreted for them God's mind about their gift to him! It was an odour of a sweet savour, an acceptable sacrifice, agreeable to God. In their kindness towards himself there was nothing wanting: he was "full." If at any time they were in need, it was Paul's God ("my God") who would supply that need, according to His riches in glory.

The God who had accepted, as a sacrifice agreeable to Him, the things sent by Epaphroditus to His servant, Paul, would not forget them in the day of their need.

(R. E.)

MEDITATIONS ON THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

CHAPTER VII.

AI AND THE ACCURSED THING.

AND Joshua the man of God? Alas! he rends his clothes and falls to the earth upon his face before the ark of the Lord. (Ver. 6.) Where was the ark in the war with Ai, before which the walls of Jericho had fallen? Joshua's godly soul acknowledges its worth, but he does not know what to do, and, ignoring the accursed thing, he gives vent to regrets, not regrets as to what *he* has done, nor as to what *the people* have done, but, alas! as to what *God* had done when He brought them over Jordan! "Would to God we had been content and dwelt on the other side Jordan," said he. How plainly these words shew what man's heart is! This blessed place is the only one that Joshua would fain have avoided.

The tone of his request betrays weakness. First it is Israel, the name of Israel which occupies his thoughts; then it is the Canaanites, the world. "*Israel* turneth their backs before

their enemies." "The *Canaanites* shall hear of it." "They shall cut off *our name* from the earth." Then quite at the end: "What wilt thou do unto *thy* great name?" (Vers. 8, 9.) The example given us in the history of God's faithful servant Moses is very different. (Ex. xxxii. 11, 13.) He had been on the mount of God, and there God reveals to him the evil which had gone on in the camp; the sin of the people does not remain hidden from the eyes of Moses. Aware of it before coming down from the mount, does he think of Israel's shame? No, he is occupied with what is suited to the Lord's name. He recognises the claims of offended holiness. As for the nations his only concern is, as to whether God would be glorified, in the eyes of the Egyptians by the defeat of His people. As for Israel, he appeals to the grace of God, to the only thing which glorifies Jehovah's name in the presence of guilty Israel. Moses had no need, like Joshua, to recover lost communion; he can intercede for the people, and he is heard.

Joshua, on the contrary, is found precisely in the attitude in which he ought not to be. "Get thee up," said the Lord to him, "wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face?" (Ver. 10.) To humble himself for his lack of power was not the only thing to be done; it was time to act. We find the opposite to this in Judges xx., where Israel

ought to have humbled themselves first and then acted. Miserable flesh! What disorder does it not introduce into the things of God! Always outside the current of His thoughts, if not in open hostility to Him. May we join with the apostle in saying: "We, who have no confidence in the flesh." Joshua had to act; the accursed thing had to be put away from amongst them.

The children of Israel had soon forgotten the presence of the Lord, which alone could open their eyes to the evil in their midst. Joshua himself had been in some measure taken in this snare of Satan, and involved in the people's weakness. If he had realised in his soul the attitude he assumed in chapter v., in loosing the shoe from off his foot, he would have understood the necessity of holiness for the people, if God's holy presence was to be with them. But Joshua falls to the earth upon his face and almost reproaches God for His grace, forgetful of His holiness: "Wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan?" He was not, for the moment at least, in the current of God's thoughts, and God makes him feel it. His thoughts were out of tune. When the accursed thing enters into the testimony of God, what we have to do is to sanctify ourselves, and to put away the evil from our midst. It is not a question here of power, but of holiness and of obedience. God said to Joshua: "Up, sanctify the people." To

sanctify oneself is to separate oneself from all evil to God. It is impossible without holiness to have God with us.

This is one of the most important truths for the present day. What should characterise us now, as in Philadelphia, is communion with "the holy and the true." I am speaking merely of an ordinary case of excommunication, and not of a case of discipline complicated, it may be, by the incapacity of the assembly to judge evil. I would not for a moment omit the true humiliation which should always accompany action in a case of discipline.

It was necessary that Israel should both individually and as a nation pass in review under the searching eye of Jehovah Himself (vers. 14, 15); their conscience was thus awakened and self was judged; each one took his place in presence of the judgment. It was the same when the wicked person at Corinth was put away. "Godly sorrow" had worked in the Corinthians "a repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Sorrow had produced humiliation, accompanied by activity and zeal in purifying the assembly of God from evil. Thus true humiliation and action went together. "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire,

yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" (2 Cor. vii. 11.)

To return to the question of holiness. In chapter v. we have individual holiness, and in chapter vii. corporate. In order that Israel should not be defiled and partakers of the accursed thing, they must put away what had entered into the midst of the congregation. Rarely do we find intelligence amongst the children of God with regard to these two aspects of practical holiness. Christians more often seek the first, that is individual holiness, and esteem the second of no importance.

Let us take an illustration to shew that individual holiness is never fully entered into apart from corporate holiness. Supposing I have a son who is blameless as to his character, and whose virtues are everywhere spoken of. He is respected in the town, and on all sides I hear the remark, "What a good son you have!" Now, this son of mine, though he does not himself drink, spends every evening at the public-house, in the company of drunkards, instead of remaining in his father's house and taking his place at the family board. Can I call him a good son?

From 2 Corinthians vi. 16 to vii. 1 we learn the close connection between these two aspects of holiness. God *begins* with corporate holiness. "Ye are the temple of the living God." (Ver. 16.) "The temple of God is *holy*." (1 Cor. iii. 17.) It

is *positional* holiness. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" "Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate." (Ver. 17.) This is *practical corporate* holiness. Then he adds: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (Chap. vii. 1.) This is *individual* holiness, and it is inseparable from corporate holiness and the promises attaching thereto.

But the corporate side is not understood by the generality of God's people who go through the world, alas! without troubling themselves about their fellow Christians, and to whom such a thing as corporate responsibility is unknown.

One often hears it said: "Oh! I do not concern myself about others; I am alone with God; I take the Lord's supper individually," &c. This is not how God views us. Let me repeat it: He sees us altogether as forming one body, united by the Holy Spirit to His glorified Son. The sin and the suffering of one member is the sin and suffering of the whole body. One more word in passing, on the sentence referred to above, which one so often hears from the lips of Christians: "I take the Lord's supper for myself." What does Scripture say? "For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Cor., x. 17.) Who are the

“many” with whom you profess to be one body? You take the supper individually to excuse your alliance with the world at the Lord’s table, and you do not see that you profess to be one body with the murderers of our Saviour, for it is the world that crucified Him.

Let us notice another point in the chapter. God said, “Sanctify yourselves *against to-morrow*.” (Ver. 13.) We are called to sanctify ourselves before and not at the moment of action. Whence comes our frequent incapacity to judge evil and to act for God? Because we have not sanctified ourselves beforehand. Why is it that so often at the worship meetings our hearts are cold and our lips silent in praise? Because we have not been obedient to the word: “Sanctify yourselves against to-morrow.” It is the same in 1 Corinthians v. The apostle possessed the power, but not the Corinthians. They were simply to obey in purging out the old leaven to be a new lump; they had to put away the wicked person from their midst.

Achan had partaken of what was under the curse of God, and he had to be put away. It was done in the valley of Achor.

But, wonderful to say, we read in Hosea ii. 15 this comforting word respecting Israel: “I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope.” Yes, beloved friends, it is always thus; blessing is given to us on the very threshold of judgment.

It is at the place of judgment that the soul at the time of its conversion finds the door of hope; it is there that it meets Christ. And later on, the believer finds the time of discipline to be the first place of hope and joy. It will be in this valley where God pronounced their judgment, that the people of Israel will, by-and-by, be blessed of God. It was there that Joshua was recovered in soul for a walk henceforth with God, while leading the people to victory.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WAY OF RECOVERY.

The wicked person had been put away from the congregation of Israel, but by the presence of evil in their midst, God had brought them to the discovery of their own self-confidence. Such cases often present themselves when an assembly is satisfied with its state, and begins to boast of it, and of its blessing and growth. Israel did this, placing their reliance not in God but in their late victory, and thus preparing a way for defeat. They had to be judged, and then to purify themselves from the evil. But restoration of soul does not consist only in self-judgment and practical sanctification. Communion with God, which sin has interrupted, must be restored.

Here I would make a remark which is perhaps of importance. In chapter vi. God manifests His power in connection with Israel in the victory over the enemy at Jericho. This same power is shewn too in the Christian's life. It may be that one has been in the enjoyment of divine power and the victories thereby obtained, without perhaps having really known either God or oneself.

And yet there was no excuse for Joshua's want of apprehension. The Captain of the Lord's host had revealed Himself to him with the drawn sword in His hand, as the Holy One armed with power for the conflict. Then, in company with the people, Joshua had witnessed the exercise of this power before Jericho; but his conscience had to be brought in contact with divine holiness, and he had as yet no sense of what it necessitated from the people as to the character of their walk. The anger of the Lord (chap. vii. 1) had to be made known to Israel and their leader, before they could learn that God in His holiness could not tolerate the accursed thing. The knowledge of God in power is not all. To possess a true and complete knowledge of Him, much more has to be learnt.

With regard to Gilgal and the learning of ourselves, it might seem that when once this point in the soul's history is reached, self ought to be done with, but in reality this is only practically realised in the measure that one *keeps* at Gilgal.

How little did the people know themselves after the victory of Jericho! Though God had taken a thousand pains to prove to them that all was of Him in the victory, what self-sufficiency, what forgetfulness they shew in attempting to face the enemy without Him!

Flight and trouble are the result, and when they resume the offensive, their path becomes difficult, laborious, and full of complications, thus exposing to their view their own weakness, which had been already made apparent to the enemy in their defeat. They have to retrace their steps, forced afresh to the discovery of themselves, but it will now be a lesson learnt through grace with Christ and not with Satan.

Notice in chapter viii. how complicated everything becomes, through not having followed the simple path of faith. The soul, humbled, finds itself once more with God, and His presence with it, but the consequences of a carnal walk remain; and although God can ultimately use these for their blessing, the path has no longer the simplicity of the early days of faith. It is a very simple path, for, to the believer who follows God's guidance in human dependence on His word, victory is assured. It was thus at Jericho, and the same power which had brought down the walls of the accursed city is with Israel at Ai; it has not changed, although the army must manœuvre and separate into two corps, five

thousand men lying in ambush, whilst the rest entice the defenders of Ai out of their stronghold.

In chapter vii. the spies had said in their report: "Let about two or three thousand men go up and smite Ai, for they are but few." And now about thirty thousand chosen mighty men of valour are required. What a humiliation, and how it lowered Israel in their own estimation! They had to go up by night, and whilst some hid, others feigned flight before the enemy. What room for boasting after this?

But you may say: You have shewn us that at Jericho it was not a question of human means, and now here are all sorts of contrivances for conquering the enemy. I reply: If you are content to use means which bring your incapacity into prominence, leaving on man the impress of his total weakness, and humiliating him so that his only resource is to flee before the foe, all well and good. But it is not in your power to do this. In truth at Ai they are no more human means than at Jericho. The difference is, that there God ordered the arrangements so that Israel might learn his power, whilst at Ai His object was to teach them their own weakness.

But in the one case and the other, let me repeat, the power of God had not changed. Israel gained the victory at Ai by means of it; Joshua was there, Joshua with the spear in his hand. At Jehovah's command Joshua stretched out the

spear that he had in his hand toward the city. (Ver. 18.) "For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." (Ver. 26.) It remained stretched out all through the conflict.

One often hears it repeated: "What does it matter if there are divisions? Have we not all the same end in view? Are we not all fighting for the same Lord, although it may be under different standards?" Is this then the teaching to be gathered from these chapters? No, they contain one great prevailing truth. The people were one; one in their victory, one in their failure, one in their defeat, one in the judgment of the evil, one in their restoration. We see around us the poor children of God scattered and divided, and they are content to say: "What does it matter?" Brethren, for what purpose did Christ die? Was it not "to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John xi. 52.) Does God scatter them after He has gathered them? No, it is the wolf who scatters the sheep. (John x. 12.) And can we say: "What does it matter?"

Diversity is not division; for it displays itself in unity. The ambush take Ai and set it on fire, whilst the twenty-five thousand men flee before their enemies, until advised by the smoke of the city to turn back upon them. Just as they begin

to fight, the ambush issuing out of the city join in the battle (ver. 22), and then all the Israelites return unto Ai and smite it with the edge of the sword. (Ver. 24.) Thus there is diversity in the action and service, but it is an action in common. The body is one; the several parts are joined together, and Joshua with his spear is the bond of union. If the unity is lost sight of, defeat is the result.

In 1 Corinthians xii., we find diversity and unity closely brought together in the church. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;" "and there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all." (Vers. 4, 6.) "For as the body is one and hath many members" (this is diversity in unity), "and all the members of that one body being many are one body" (this is unity in diversity), "so also is the Christ." We are united in one body, the Christ, and yet every child of God has his appointed work which no one can accomplish for him. Each one is entrusted with a different service; I cannot do yours, nor you mine.

Israel is now restored to communion with God. Throughout this scene the activity of the people is blessedly characterised by the presence of Joshua. When they were going to war, we read: "Joshua arose, and all the people." (Ver. 3.) On the eve of battle: "Joshua lodged that night amongst the people." (Ver. 9.) When the march

was about to begin: "Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley." (Ver. 13.) When it was a question of enticing the enemy: "Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten." (Ver. 15.) When they had put to flight the enemy: "Joshua and all Israel . . . slew the men of Ai." (Ver. 21.) And finally when the victory was decided in their favour: "Joshua drew not his hand back . . . until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." (Ver. 26.)

THE RECOVERY OF GIBEAH.

The effect of the defeat at Ai was that the Israelites learnt to know their own hearts better, and at the same time the character of the God who went before them. Before noting the practical results of what God had taught them through discipline, I should like to point out a resemblance between Joshua vii., viii., and Judges xx., xxi.

It is an accepted fact that the book of Judges after chapter xvii. does not follow any chronological order (chap. xx. 28), but gives us a picture of what took place before God raised up the judges, of the history of Israel immediately after the death of Joshua. There had been utter and rapid decline; idolatry and moral corruption reigned everywhere. At the beginning and end of these chapters we find the statement: "Every

man did that which was right in his own eyes." No such thing as dependence on God and His word, man's conscience being the measure of good and evil. Each one walked according to his own sense of right and wrong, making conscience the measure of his conduct.

Is not this a picture of Christendom and of what happened after the departure of the apostles? Was decline less complete and sudden? Leaving aside the corrupt principles of popery, which does enlightened Protestant Christendom bring forward as the rule of conduct, the word of God or conscience? Does it teach subjection to the Scriptures, or is its watchword liberty of conscience? If conscience is taken as a guide, absolute confusion is the result, each one *hastening to follow his own opinion.*

But a horrible sin had taken place at Gibeah; and that not as in Joshua vii., the accursed thing, hidden failure, but as a sin committed openly before God and man. The unhappy Levite himself publishes his shame, every tribe in Israel being apprised of it (xix. 29). And the people, what of them? Well, God uses the sin of Gibeah, as He did the sin of Achan, to lay bare their moral condition, to humble them and to awaken within them the consciousness of what is due to God. Only here the moral state of the tribes is more serious; they have sunk much lower than at Ai. Indignant at the wrong done to them-

selves, the thought of the wrong done to God is entirely overlooked. They speak of the folly wrought by Gibeah in Israel, of the wickedness done amongst those of the tribe of Benjamin, but not a word of the dishonour brought upon the Lord's name. How evident the declension, and how different are the words of Phinehas to the two and a half tribes: (Josh. xxii. 16) "What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel?"

To this first symptom of decline, we may add a second; namely, that they had abandoned what might be called their first love. The Lord was no longer before their eyes; their affection for Him, and consequently for those born of Him, had diminished. They forgot that Benjamin was their brother. "Which of us shall go up first to the battle against *the children of Benjamin*?" (Ver. 18) and these last on their side "would not hearken to the voice of *their brethren* the children of Israel." (Ver. 13.)

A third symptom of decline is that they lose sight of the unity of the people. No doubt, to all appearance, the eleven tribes presented a unity nearly as perfect as when Israel purified themselves from Achan and were restored at Ai. Nevertheless it was no longer God's unity. It was in vain that the people "were gathered together as one man" (ver. 1), or that they "arose as one man" (ver. 8), or that they were knit together

as one man" (ver. 11), against Gibeah : God could not recognise the unity of Israel whilst Benjamin was lacking. Beloved, these links in the chain of declension are rivetted one to the other ; forgetfulness of the presence of God, surrender of the first love, contempt for the real unity in spite of a show of the same.

And was not Benjamin guilty ? Yes, exceedingly so. One sees that his mind was made up from the outset not to judge evil. Warned equally with the other tribes (xix. 29) of a crime patent to all, knowing that the children of Israel were about to judge the evil, in fact warned, albeit in a carnal spirit, that he would have to purify himself, he yet turns a deaf ear to the call of duty. By establishing the principle of independence, he disowns the unity of Israel, and far from purifying himself from the crime of Gibeah, he links himself with it, at the same time resorting to a useless and miserable attempt at making a distinction. (Ver. 15.) Benjamin had to be judged, but the state of the people as a whole was too bad to admit of a divine judgment on their part, and they must be sifted before being able in truth to purify themselves from the sin of Gibeah.

If Israel had had a right sense of things, they would have first humbled themselves before the Lord, taken counsel of Him, and then acted ; instead of which they begin by consulting one another, miserable result of forgetfulness of God's

presence; they take measures, and decide very scripturally "to put away the evil from Israel," quite forgetting that they are themselves infected by the evil, that Benjamin is in fact part of them. After having made all their arrangements and numbered their warriors, "they arose and went up to the house of God and *asked counsel of God.*" (Ver. 18.) This is also the spirit of declension, and it is to be found everywhere in Christendom, and often amongst the children of God; in fact it is a widely established principle. We propose some plan to ourselves, and at the moment of its execution, often *after* all is arranged, we ask the blessing of God.

The result of this total oversight of divine principles, was that in the first day twenty-two thousand Israelites were destroyed down to the ground. Then they went up and wept before the Lord; their hearts are now full of sorrow instead of carnal indignation, and they call Benjamin their *brother*. Their love and sense of responsibility one to another is revived. After this they again set their battle in array and lose eighteen thousand men in a second defeat. God in His goodness sought to produce a perfect result. Sorrow in itself was not everything, neither the proclamation of the bonds which united them; what was needed was a full and complete judgment of self; repentance before God. To enjoy once more the presence of the Lord and His

communion, they must retrace their steps in the pathway of declension. Thus it is said: "Then all the children of Israel and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace-offerings before the Lord." (Ver. 26.)

What comes next bears a striking analogy to the scene at Ai. They were obliged to set liers in wait (ver. 29), to flee before Benjamin (ver. 32); and after all their previous losses to have thirty men wounded to death, and to make a great flame like smoke rise up out of the city, to serve as a signal. Thoroughly judged and restored to communion with God, Israel can now discharge the painful duty of judging Benjamin for his profanity; but ah! what weeping and tears follow on the victory. (Chap. xxi. 2.) How different from the scene at Jericho, where "the people shouted with a great shout, and the wall fell down flat." (Chap. vi. 20.) Here it was a question of their own brethren, of a tribe all but cut off in judgment. But God in grace restores the gleaning of Benjamin, notwithstanding the many complications brought about by the carnal hate of Israel in their first decisions.

There is however one part of the congregation of Israel which the restored people treat with more severity than Benjamin himself. There came none to the camp from Jabesh-Gilead to

the assembly. (Chap. xxi. 8.) It was bare-faced indifference, and *neutrality* with regard to the evil of which they took no account; far worse than the spirit of fleshly indignation in which Benjamin had revolted, despising a decision of the assembly, and which had led him to take arms against his brethren, while associating himself with evil. Jabesh had to be utterly destroyed.

RESULTS OF DISCIPLINE.

BUT to return to Joshua and the people. Israel had learnt in the pathway of humiliation not to trust in themselves, and this expression at once bears fruit. Henceforth if controlled by the word of God, and trusting in its perfect guidance, they would escape further falls. In verses 27–35, we see Joshua and the people obeying the Lord's commandment (vers. 27, 31, 33, 35), and depending on what is written in the book of the law. (Vers. 31, 34.) The effect of being humbled is that Joshua and the people are reminded in heart of the statutes laid down in Deuteronomy xxvii.

More than this: the hanging of the king of Ai shews that Joshua is informed as to the details of his conduct by the word of God. "As soon as the sun went down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree." (Cf. Deut. xxi. 22, 23.) To all human appearance

this would be a detail of no importance, but a heart fed by the word of God could not overlook it. To neglect it, would have been to lose sight of the holiness of God, and Joshua would then have failed in the very point which brought down chastisement on the people. "His body shall not remain all night upon the tree for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thy land be not defiled which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." (Deut. xxi. 23.) And again: "Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, *wherein I dwell*; for I the Lord dwell among the children of Israel." (Num. xxxv. 34.) In a word, a holy God could not dwell in the midst of defilement; this was the blessed lesson which Joshua received from the Lord of hosts before Jericho, which he learnt amidst tears in the valley of Achor, and which, with a conscience exercised in the school of God, he blessedly realised in the day of victory.

We learn another lesson in the judgment of the king of Ai. The bringing together in Deuteronomy xxi. 18-23 of the two events contained in Joshua vii. and viii., the cutting off of the wicked person and the judgment of the enemy, is not without significance. This is practically always the case. The assembly must purge out the evil from its midst before it can silence and bring to nought the evil outside. You will find, where evil is tolerated in the assembly, a total

absence of that decision and firmness which deals with the enemy as such, without coming to terms, and puts him at the outset in the only place assigned to him of God, according to the scripture: "He that is hanged is accursed of God."

There is one more striking coincidence in the verses we are considering. The gibbet of the king of Ai was the place of the judgment and curse of Israel's enemy. But here the people are obliged to stand themselves on Mount Ebal, where the curse of God is pronounced upon them. This terrible conclusion of the law which Israel could not escape, God had brought to nought by the cross of Christ.* Christ bore on the cross the curse which was pronounced at Ebal on man as a responsible being, to redeem us from it. Israel could see in type on the gibbet at Ai, what we see in the cross of Christ, Satan, our chief enemy, defeated and annihilated; but we see also, as has been already remarked, all the curse under which we lay at Ebal, for ever gone in the actual judgment of Him who took this place for us. In Galatians iii. 10, 13, we find the same blessed connection between Ebal and the cross. "For it is written" (Deut. xxvii. 26), "Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

* It should be noted that the altar here was built upon Mount Ebal, not on Mount Gerizim, and served, so to speak, as a counterpoise in grace to the curse.

The curses at Ebal close with these words, but the apostle adds: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." This is the hanging of the king of Ai.

A further result of discipline was that Israel, now humbled, were in a state to worship. "Then Joshua built an altar unto the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal . . . and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings." With us likewise, there can be no communion without self-judgment, and no worship without communion. The altar in Mount Ebal was the provision in grace for the curse of the law on transgressors. In the altar we have propitiation, which is the basis of all true worship; only here it is in presence of a people threatened by the curse if they do not obey. The cross which has put an end to the curse for us, is the starting-point or centre of our worship, and sheds upon us the full light of divine grace.

But grace itself never weakens our responsibility as God's children. There are conditions under which the land is taken possession of. A duplicate of the law was to be written upon great stones set up and plastered with plaster. (Deut. xxvii. 2, 3; Josh. viii. 32.) This same law was read aloud "before all the congregation of Israel." (Ver. 35.) Let us never forget that Jesus Christ is at the same time our Saviour and

our Lord, the One who has pardoned us, and the One who has every claim over us. The knowledge of His grace fills our mouths with praise in worship; the sense of our responsibility leads us to persevere in holiness and truth, to fight the good fight, to take possession of the promised land.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SNARE OF GIBEON.

As we advance in the study of our chapters, the enemy presents himself under new aspects. Satan knows how to make war; he knows how to place his batteries, to attack openly, and to overwhelm by numbers; but he also knows how to employ subterfuge, to deceive by craft, and to ensnare. Jericho, as an obstacle, gave way before faith; but Satan is not discouraged, he gets at Israel by means of their lusts, and the accursed thing enters into the camp; he occupies the soul with past victories, and self-confidence takes possession of the heart. Israel, forgetful of the whole armour of God, is caught in the enemy's nets. But Satan's victory is the school of God for the righteous. They cease trusting in themselves, and entering into the claims of God's holiness, they seek their safeguard in the

word of God, owning, at length, their responsibility, of which they seemed previously scarcely aware.

In chapter ix. we find more particularly "the wiles of the devil," and it is expressly against these that we are cautioned in the word. In order to stand firm, we must "put on the whole armour of God; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

We see the power of God under various aspects in the Epistle to the Ephesians, and in the first chapters of Joshua. In Ephesians i. 19, His power *toward* us corresponds typically with the crossing of Jordan. In chapter iii. 16, 20, His power *in* us corresponds with the divinely-spread table in Joshua v.; and in chapter vii. 10, His power *with* us, and the armour, in its various parts, corresponds with the conflict with the power of evil, such as we see in the succeeding chapters of Joshua.

We have already seen what vessels God takes up, through which to glorify Himself in this conflict; creatures so weak, that their only resource is to depend on Him. As I have often said, God makes use of two classes of instruments to accomplish His work: first, those who have no value in themselves. "God hath chosen the foolish, weak, base things of the world, and things which are despised, and things *which are not.*" (1 Cor. i. 27, 28.) Could stronger language

be used to convey the nothingness of the vessels God deigns to use? But He also takes up instruments which are of great value in the eyes of men and to themselves. Saul of Tarsus was a man looked up to—learned, religious, energetic, conscientious; to all appearance he lacked in nothing of that which God could turn to account. Yet God lays hold of him, strikes him to the ground, on the way to Damascus, and, so to speak, breaks the vessel to pieces. Then He says, Now I can use him.

The consciousness of our nothingness as instruments keeps us in constant dependence on the hand which makes use of us, and this is the pathway of power. It was thus at Jericho, but the people had yet to learn that without dependence they became the prey of Satan. In closing the description of the armour, the apostle adds, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." (Eph. vi. 18.) Prayer is the expression of dependence; continual, persevering prayer is the expression of habitual dependence. Now the Israelites' chief fault, in chapter ix., was, "that they asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord." (Ver. 14.) We saw, at the close of the preceding chapter, that the word of God had recovered its importance for them; but here they forget to go to God, so as to have communion with Him as to His mind for them.

Notice how Satan succeeds in making them lose the sense of dependence. He intimidates them by something calculated to strike terror into their hearts; the hatred of the world, a confederation of kings assembled for war. (Vers. 1, 2.) He begins by engaging their attention with this formidable power prepared to crush them, and then, without losing a moment, he offers them *his* resource: the inhabitants of Gibeon come to the camp at Gilgal. Israel was not prepared for this, they had not on the whole armour of God. The leaders of the people failed in detecting what seems to have occurred to the minds of the simple—for a moment, at least; and it is often so; humility and a single eye go together, and are accompanied by true and divine intelligence. “Make ye a league with us,” said the Gibeonites. What a good opportunity for Israel! “The enemy is before you,” whispered Satan; “this would be a splendid way of overcoming him.”

These men came, with all sorts of good intentions, seeking an alliance with the people of God, and openly acknowledging their moral and spiritual supremacy. “We are thy servants,” they said to Joshua (ver. 8), words well calculated to influence him in their favour. Finally, they proclaim the power and fame of Israel’s God, and what He had done in Egypt and the wilderness, though, it is true, they do not say a word about

Canaan ; Satan would betray himself by chancing to speak of heavenly places and their conflicts.

The character of the Gibeonites, and their religious convictions, are very strongly marked, but they are Canaanites in disguise, the world under an external form of piety—the religious world. Up to this Israel had been kept from seeking human aid, but it was hard to resist those who professed to have the same object, and the same aspirations. Is it not a legitimate thing to form an alliance ? We own Jehovah, as you do, and, in case of need, we could co-operate with you as your servants.

Ah ! how little the children of Israel suspected at this moment that the Gibeonites were those very Canaanites whom they were commanded to drive out from the land of promise. They are caught in the enemy's net, having neglected to take counsel of the Lord, and, as a sign of fellowship, they take of the victuals of these men. The treaty is concluded ; the world is introduced into the midst of the congregation of Israel. What a diabolical artifice ! Satan suggests to the people the introduction of the world into the camp, as a method of conquering the enemy, thus offering himself as a means of overcoming himself. He knew well that the moment he had succeeded in bringing in this element, the way would be paved for everything else.

Do not these things remind us of the church's

history? The hearts of the Lord's people had begun to be corrupted as early as the days of the apostles, by the outward attractions of a religion suited to the earth and the world, which was creeping in everywhere, and which obscured the heavenly position, its interests and hopes, beguiling souls into an alliance with the world which had crucified Christ. Satan gained his end. He set up his throne in the midst of the church, and the apostle was obliged at length to say, "among you, where Satan dwelleth." (Rev. ii. 13.) Henceforth, alas! it is no longer a question merely of conflict with enemies outside, but of standing against the power of evil in the church.

But the grace of God is with Israel, and although this chapter gives us the entrance of evil into the congregation, we do not find its development. God delivers us from certain consequences of our sin, and allows others to remain. The people of God had to undergo the mournful experience of keeping the Gibeonites in their midst, as a lasting witness to their failure. Having begun by murmuring against the princes, the children of Israel are brought eventually to a truer sense of their duty. There was but one thing to do, namely, to bear with the Gibeonites in their midst, whilst keeping them in the place of the curse. "Now, therefore, ye are *cursed*," said Joshua unto them. (Ver. 23.) Israel

could only view them as an accursed race. The judgment of the king of Ai was pronounced, not executed, upon them, and in the meantime their safety lay in the name of Jehovah. Israel could not touch them; they must bear their humiliation, and avoid henceforth having any fellowship with those whom they left under the weight of the divine curse.

We, too, in the church have to undergo the consequences of our unfaithfulness, and to be humbled on account of the evil which has crept into the house of God. But, whilst truly alive to this our shame, we shall yet, if faithful, be able to distinguish between what is of God, and what merely bears His name outwardly. The word discerns and reveals to us the mixture, and faith leaves the religious world under the curse, at the same time acting in grace towards it.

In 2 Samuel xxi. we find another chapter of the history of the Gibeonites; and here we clearly see that God's purpose was in nowise to remove them from the place which they had usurped in the congregation of Israel. Saul, animated by ardent zeal for the congregation, but in nowise for God, being completely ignorant of His mind, had exterminated them. Years pass, and suddenly we find a famine breaking out in Israel. David seeks the face of the Lord, and inquires into the cause of this calamity; and the Lord answers: "It is for Saul, and for his bloody

house, because he slew the Gibeonites." The flesh, which has brought in the evil, is eager, above everything, to get rid of it. The way of God is quite otherwise: His children must feel the evil, and it is thus that their communion with Him shews itself in an evil day. In Ezekiel ix. 4, the Lord tells the angel to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst of Jerusalem. Those who felt the evil were expressly sheltered from the destructor.

Beloved brethren, principles such as these should guide us in these closing days. It is not for us to take the sword, and cut off the evil, but to groan and sigh, saying, "The evil is mine." We cannot purify the place; it only remains for us to humble ourselves, and, at the same time, purge ourselves from vessels to dishonour. This is what a worldly Christian never learns; he is not humbled by the presence of the world in the church; he defends it, and deems it an impossibility to distinguish between the Gibeonites and the children of Israel. Far from pronouncing them accursed, or robbing them of any part of the blessed liberty of the children of God, or declaring them strangers to His people (cf. Deut. xxix. 11), he would be tempted rather to become their servant, and to cut wood for the house of their god.

The seven sons of Saul were hung, and be-

came accursed, on account of this bloody deed of slaying the Gibeonites, which was a pretence at purifying the congregation. How many similar cases the history of the church affords. The extermination of heretics, real or supposed, was no other than the crime of Saul, and will be reckoned to its perpetrators.

May God give us a spirit of constant dependence upon Him, that so we may be enabled to resist the snares of the devil. This chapter gives us only one of his wiles, but, if alive to the danger, we shall discover that his design in every artifice is to turn away our gaze from heavenly things, and so to lower our Christianity, that it should be nothing more than what the world can share in with us. (H. L. R.)

Righteousness, as to forgiveness, is negative before sealing; but righteousness positive I learn in Christ. (J. N. D.)

THE THREE PARABLES OF MARK IV.

MARK IV. 14-41.

It is difficult to understand clearly the structure of this passage without referring to the corresponding one in Matthew xiii., which furnishes an explanation to it. I may indeed say, the whole gospel of Matthew furnishes, in some respects, a key to the other gospels. Matthew gives dispensational truth, dealing with facts which are more readily laid hold of by us than principles of truth, but which are necessary to the right intelligence of these principles.

In Matthew the kingdom is habitually called "the kingdom of heaven"—an expression which is peculiar to that Gospel. It presents to us the sphere in which the authority and government of God are known. Christ is the One who exercises it as Son of man; as we read in Daniel vii.: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,*

* It is interesting to notice the very same three words that occur in Daniel vii. 14 are found again in Revelation i. 6, the moment the Lord is introduced: "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." It is really "He hath made [of] us a kingdom."

that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The moment He comes before the Ancient of days all the power is given to Him.

In this passage we see the place where the dominion and glory is given to the Son of man, and consequently get a further detail as to how the eighth Psalm is accomplished. But the great point is that He who stands before the Ancient of days is "One like unto the Son of man," as it is stated in the Psalm: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." It is to *man* not *angels* that the "world to come" is subjected. This is what the apostle insists on in Hebrews, when quoting this passage from the Psalm; and he adds: "But we see Jesus, who was "Kings," though it reads more easily, is not so exact in meaning, however true it may be that we shall reign with Christ, as stated elsewhere. We are the "kingdom,"—"priests" to His God and Father; He has made us so, and the glory and dominion are His; all is given to Him. Do we know in our hearts the truth as to the heavenly kingdom as expressed in Luke ix. 27-36? And are our lives spiritually and morally the expression of it here on earth before God, our God and Father?

made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. . . . For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." (Heb. ii. 9, 16.)

The truth as to this coming time of blessing, foretold all through the Old Testament, is, that the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the One whom all the prophecies speak of, and in whom all the promises centre, that One is a *Man*. He has not taken up angels; and God does not subject Messiah's kingdom to angels at all. It is put under the power of *man*, in His person—the "Son of man:" "Thou hast put all things under his feet."

Now we come to another point. The moment He enters into this place of power as man, the kingdom of heaven really begins. It is, as far as we are concerned, in mystery and patience surely; but the power is given to Him, though He has not as yet taken possession of His "world kingdom," according to the expression of Revelation xi. 15.* But as He says in the end of Matthew: "All power *is* given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye *therefore* and teach all nations." Indeed how else could they? He had sent them forth "as sheep among wolves." As such what prospect could be before them but to be eaten up:

* See the New Version.

“killed all the day long, accounted as sheep for the slaughter”? If He had not all power in His hands, how could they now go forth to preach? But there *is* power given to His servants to go forth, and that because HE is in the place of power, as we find it indeed clearly indicated, in accordance with the general character of the Gospel of Matthew.

Another passage which will help to make this clear is the parable of the nobleman in Luke xix. Jesus was just entering into the city, at the end of the journey which according to the structure of the gospel begins in chapter ix., when He comes down from the mount of transfiguration. He was on the mountain with the two “men” who appeared with Him in glory—Moses and Elias, and who “spoke with him of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” He comes down from that mountain with His face “stedfastly set to go to Jerusalem,” and telling His disciples that what He was going to there was the cross.

They did not understand His words, and were afraid to ask Him their meaning. We find in the Gospels that He spoke of it to them four times at least. But they did not understand. And when He arrived at Jerusalem, they thought, as we read in chapter xix., “that the kingdom of God would immediately appear.” So He “added and spoke the parable” referred to above. “A certain nobleman went into *a far country* to re-

ceive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."

Now this shews what Christianity is. Christ has gone into "the far country" to receive the kingdom: for it is given in heaven to the Son of man, as Daniel vii. shews. He has gone up as Man to receive it, and now we are waiting for His promised return. "Occupy till I come" is His word to us; it is our sole business now. Knowing that He is gone up there to receive the kingdom, our privilege is to be waiting for Him, and occupied meanwhile especially with that part of the kingdom which is nearest to God; that is the *heavenly* side. So in chapter xii. the Lord warns us against being careful about things *here*, as food and raiment. We are not to be of a doubtful mind, for, He says, "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Surely then He will care about the small temporal needs of His children, for whom He has prepared such glory. We are to seek "His kingdom,"* and all the needed things of this life will be "added" to us. The very smallest thing possible He knows you have need of, He makes His care. What He desires for you is that you should be occupied with things above, having an unfailing treasure in the heavens, the place to which the Lord is

* So it should be read in Luke, and not "kingdom of God," as in Matthew. Here it is the *Father's*.

gone. This, too, gives a deepening value for our souls to the expression "the kingdom of *heaven*."

But let us glance at Matthew xiii. There are in it seven parables, six of which relate to the kingdom of heaven. The first one, that of the "sower," is introductory, and unfolds the principle on which the Lord is now acting. Then three parables, spoken to the multitude, furnish a view of the kingdom seen in its external character; the last three lift the veil to shew us what is internal, unseen by the world and unknown to those who do not know Christ. These three are spoken in the house privately, to the disciples, when the Lord gives them the explanation of the parable of the tares.

Let us look, then, for a moment at this introductory parable in the order in which it is given in Matthew and Mark. On the face of it, we see that the Lord is not now seeking fruit from this world. Man is no longer looked at in his responsibility to bring forth fruit to God. This had been the case under law, and it was continued too, whilst the Lord was upon earth, as is shewn by the parable of the fig-tree in Luke xiii. 6-9, and again by His cursing the fig-tree that brought forth nothing but leaves. And so, in John, He says: "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloke for their sin." As a matter of fact the trial of man went on up to the cross; but

here the Lord shews that He is introducing a new principle, a new way of dealing with man. It is no longer man under probation, but He Himself brings into this world what is divine and absolutely perfect: He "sows" in it the WORD OF GOD; and this is what is to bring forth fruit for God. The Sower is Christ Himself. Thus both the Sower and the seed sown are perfect, divine, infinite. And, being sown, the seed remains in its own divine perfection.

As the parable is explained in Mark iv. 14-20, one is struck by the way in which, as compared with the other Gospels, the word "sow" characterises the whole passage in Mark. It is peculiar to this gospel. In verse 14 we read: "THE SOWER SOWETH the word." The thought of sowing is given doubly in this verse. It is His own personal work, and the seed, too, is divine; but this latter is more the point of the parable in Luke. (See Luke viii. 11.)*

Then He goes on to speak of the four classes of hearers. It is remarkable to find the word "sown" introduced in verse 15, for the seed was eaten up by the birds. But the way it is stated allows for the strict truth as to this; "those by the way-side *where* the word is sown," thus

* It will be observed, in comparing the Gospels, that Matthew brings out the *Person* who sows, "the Son of man;" Mark insists upon the *work*; and Luke, on the *thing sown*—"the word of God." (Matt. xiii. 37; so in ver. 18 it is "the parable of the SOWER.")

leaving the direct effect produced indefinite, while the point of the parable is maintained in its integrity, as Mark does all through, insisting upon the *work* of "the sower." So the word is repeated in the end of the verse: ". . . the word *sown* in their hearts." It assumes, indeed, in Mark an importance it has not in the other Gospels, not only from its being repeated in the description of each succeeding class (vers. 16, 18, 20), so that the verb is found six times in verses 14-20, but also in the two succeeding parables, the same prominent idea is kept before us. See verses 26, 31, 32. It is the divine *work* of Him who has come as the Servant-Prophet into this world, and prepares here for God, by the word, a living testimony to the truth. Over and over again this word "sown" is repeated; it is the important part of the truth in these three parables. It is no longer God testing man, coming down to see what good He can get out of the world, but it is God in grace bringing into the world that which **can** and does bring forth fruit for Himself, though in different degrees certainly. In Mark it is precious to find that the measure of this fruit-bearing gets ever higher and higher, until it reaches "an hundred-fold." The Lord's heart cannot rest satisfied until God has His full desired portion.

In this Gospel also we have another characteristic word: "straightway," or, "immediately." It is not lacking in this parable, and very

solemn it is in verse 15: "Satan cometh *immediately*, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts." The activity of the enemy in evil comes out in marked contrast with the unceasing, unwearying energy of God's holy Servant. But more: in verse 16, "they receive the word *immediately* with gladness." But does that necessarily give hope for the apparently willing hearer? Alas! it only serves to make more evident man's inefficiency and weakness; such persons are as "*immediately* offended" as they had quickly received, being unable to endure affliction or persecution arising for the word's sake.

The third class is that which was sown among thorns; in this case "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and *the lusts of other things entering in*," choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. This latter is another remarkable expression. It does not say the things that are already there; it is other things that keep *entering in*: it implies an unceasing activity of the enemy to destroy the effect of God's word in the soul, thus demanding, on our part, continued watchfulness, that we may not be entrapped.

The Sower *sows* the seed. If it had been merely doing good for people, nothing could have been got out of them by that. The Lord "did not commit himself" to those whose intelligences were convinced by the evidence of

His power in the miracles which He did, but whose consciences were unreached by the word. (John ii. 23-25.) When seed is sown it is another matter. The sower expects to reap fruit from it in the place where he sowed it. You may leave your garden without sowing anything in it at all, and in that case you could not look to get anything but weeds out of it; but if you want it to bring forth fruit, you will sow it with the seeds of what you wish it to produce. So Christ has come down here to sow seed for God. And the seed sown brings forth fruit, though indeed in different measures. In some cases there is comparatively little fruit; the yield is but thirty-fold; yet He does not pass it by unnoticed, because it is little, though he goes on to say that there is that which does bring forth more: there is the sixty-fold. And, further still, for He cannot rest short of what answers to the delight of God's heart, there is the full measure—"the hundred-fold." May it be so with us through His mercy, as our hearts dwell in His love!

In considering the two following parables we must go back for a moment to Matthew xiii., which presents six parables relating to the kingdom.

There are first, as we have seen, the three which refer to what is outward in the kingdom—its aspect in this world. The first of these is the parable of the tares, where the enemy seeks to spoil the fruit-bearing of the field by sowing

other seed amongst that sown by the Son of man. The Lord gives no remedy for such a state of things : the servants are to leave it all as it is, letting both grow together to the harvest, because they are not competent to judge of what should be rooted up and what left. The judgment, when it comes, is committed to other hands.

Next, the Lord speaks of the great tree grown from "the least of all seeds." The kingdom of heaven, which had so small a beginning, becomes a great power in the world, so that the birds of the air—unclean things, such as those emissaries of Satan who caught away the seed that fell by the way side—come and "lodge in the branches thereof."

And, lastly, we are told of the leaven "hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." The whole thing becomes corrupted in man's hand: it is Christendom as man has made it by adulterating christian doctrine. The Lord does not there say what He will do with it, but He indicates what has taken place.

Thus far we have the outward public aspect of the kingdom. Then, in the secret of the house, the Lord gives His disciples those two beautiful parables of the treasure found in the field and the pearl of great price. We know what the field is: the Lord had explained it before, in connection with the tares; it is the world. And we know the One who found the treasure in it—the only

One who could see it and who had anything to sell so that he might buy it. Angels looked down upon a scene of moral degradation here, growing darker and darker as the years rolled by. What treasure could they see in it? What could they do to remedy it, though they might wonder at the grace that bore with it so long? But there was One who looked on it and saw in the world a treasure that would serve to set forth the glory of God. And He *hid* it. So at the beginning of His ministry He tells His disciples two things. He says, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and "Ye are the light of the world." The "salt" answered in a way to His hiding the treasure. Christians are the salt of the earth. It is for their sake the world is preserved from imminent destruction. So in Peter, "we are to count the long-suffering of God as salvation." Hence, too, our responsibility, as in 1 Timothy ii., to pray for the powers of the world, "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty," that this world may be kept going on by God's power, the progress of evil restrained, and the governments, though they know it not, overruled so that we may be left to serve Him in quietness, and that His word may have free course and be glorified.

On the other hand, the *responsibility* of Christians is that there should be a light on God's behalf, a living testimony for Him, in the

world. The former truth is more brought out in Matthew; the latter in Mark, see chap. iv. 21-25.

The next parable, that of the pearl, goes deeper, bringing out what is more personal to Christ. It is no longer the field bought for the sake of the treasure, but the pearl itself, in its moral beauty, is the object of His research and desire. It is the church; but we find here, I believe, a divine principle, which I do not think we ought to limit so as to apply it only to the church. The principle holds in the case of an individual soul, and so indeed as applied to Christians generally, viewed as children walking before the Father. The apostle says in Galatians: "He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*;" in Ephesians "Christ loved *us*, and gave himself for *us*;" and so, too, we read in Revelation: "Unto him that loved *us*, and washed *us* from our sins in his own blood;" and again in Ephesians v. we find: "Christ loved the *church*, and gave himself for *it*." It is the divine *principle* of His love that we get in the pearl, though our hearts know that the beauty He sees in it is the fruit of His own toil. Was ever love like this?

The last parable in Matthew xiii. shews us the work of the servants, the fishermen instructed in the Master's mind and ways in view of that which He is now doing in grace in this world.

To resume then, we have seen in these six parables of the kingdom of heaven in Matthew

xiii. its outward and inward aspect; the latter affording us a precious insight into the Lord's thoughts and blessed work. The two parables in Mark iv. give us the same two aspects, though in the inverse order: they are the two things that our hearts have to learn, in order that we may walk through this world in wisdom and grace, in a way worthy of Him.

But before speaking of them I would say just a word as to the difference of the two Gospels. Matthew presents the King, Messiah, the Anointed One who is to reign. Mark gives the perfect Servant, the living Word, He who came to do God's will, and who, on entering into His service on earth is introduced in the first verse of the Gospel as "the Son of God;" for, if He is to be the Servant, it is as Son of God. Thus we too have to learn the qualification for service: there is none *now* apart from sonship. So it is, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." And we find Him all through the Gospel as the perfect Servant-Prophet declaring God's mind, and carrying out His will in this world.

We cannot now go into the details; but we find Him in chapter iii. joining others to Himself in this service; we read: "He ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." In Matthew, as we have seen, all power being now given to Him in heaven and earth, He sends them forth to all

nations. And then in John: "As my *Father* hath sent me, even so send I you;" which implies the Sonship. Both sides of the truth are united in His person in the Gospel of Mark. When at the end of the Gospel He ascends to heaven, He leaves the testimony in the world, giving power to His word, which always goes out through His servants, as we read in the last verse: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

They preach everywhere. What had they been called for? That they might be "sent forth to preach." But there was a needed preparation for this service, in the place which He gave them, near to His own blessed person. "He ordained them that they might be *with Him*." Then, when He sends them forth, He works *with them*. How could they preach unless they knew His mind? We have to learn that it is our joy and blessing, through His grace, to be able to present His truth according to His mind. And to do this we must be habitually *with Him* in spirit, dwelling with Him, and learning of Him.

These considerations will, I trust, help us to seize the special character of the two parables of the kingdom of God in Mark. The first one, following after that of the sower, gives us again the sowing of the seed, the bringing in of the divine word. We know who this "man" is, this "sower" who

“cast seed into the ground.” There is only one. He does not say there are many sowers. It is the Lord.

The parable continues: “And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear; after that, the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.” Mark again the word “immediately.” During all the progress of growth what is he waiting for? When the farmer has cast the seed into the ground he has abandoned it all to the soil. He has it no longer in his granary; it is no longer in his power; he cannot set his eyes on it; it is gone. It is of no use his going to look at the ground in which it lies; it is of no use his rooting it up as children do sometimes to see if it is growing. He can only leave it alone; he cannot help it in any way: “The earth bringeth forth fruit of *itself*.” He cannot help it to grow; if the rain does not fall, he cannot make it sprout; if the sun does not shine, he cannot make it ripen. From the moment he has cast the grain into the ground he has practically given it over into God’s hands; he has his daily occupation elsewhere, and as he sleeps and rises night and day, the time passes while he waits—waits for the harvest day. Then he has again work to do in his field: “*immediately* he puts in the sickle.”

And that is what the Lord is doing now. He has sown the seed, but does not interfere in any active, outwardly apparent way; He is leaving it to grow: "The earth bringeth forth fruit of *itself*." And this is applicable in principle to the individual soul as well as to the entire church, as indeed we saw in considering the parable of the pearl in Matthew. If it is the individual, the "harvest" is the completion of divine work in the soul in God's school while passing it through this world: when ripe, He puts in the sickle and takes the soul home to Himself. If it is the church, He is waiting until the last one is called in and then He will come to take all His redeemed home to Himself in glory. He is waiting for the harvest-day—that day when He will present to "himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

And what are you and I looking on to, beloved friends? Are we waiting for that harvest-day? Do we so realise in our souls "the kingdom of God" as to have it before us in this aspect of the carrying out to the end of God's will in His ways with His own, whether individually or collectively, and that for the glory of Christ and the delight of His heart, that He may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? Is it this which is occupying us, giving us courage to go on serving Him, and making us to abound in joy in the Holy Ghost? The more we think of it, the more we shall find it comes into all the de-

tails of our daily life. Christ is waiting for the harvest; He will not be satisfied till it comes. In Thessalonians we get the very same thought: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." Just what we find indeed in this chapter of Mark. His love is shewn to *men*. Before ever the world was. His "delights were with the sons of men." It is not said to have been with the angels. It is with *men*; amongst them, He came to live and die; amongst them, in this earth, He has sown the precious divine seed. The "*love of God*" is manifested in sending His only begotten Son into the world. (John iii.) And the "*patience of Christ*" shines out in His waiting for the harvest day. (See 2 Thess. iii. 5.)

In the next parable—that of the grain of mustard-seed—we have the outward aspect of the kingdom of God as in Matthew xiii. 31, 32, only that here stress is laid again by repetition on the word "sown." It is as the insignificant seed, which "when it is *sown* in the earth is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is *sown*, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; * so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it." That is what the kingdom of God has become in its external aspect. Principles and agents of evil find a convenient home in

* This expression is peculiar to Mark: but compare the "*great tree*," of Luke xiii. 19.

it; they "lodge under the shadow of it." It shoots out "great branches;" there is plenty of room and convenience for lodging in it. He does not say that the tree is going to be cut down, or its branches lopped off, or that the birds are to be driven out, but he states a fact that all must admit who have eyes to see and hearts to understand. This great power is in the world both for good and evil; it is full of confusion and corruption; yet we are not told to expect that things will get brighter or become better. What have we then for our hearts to rest in? Is it not the blessed certainty that He is waiting for the harvest day, and that then His heart will be satisfied in having around Him for ever through eternity all those who have been "brought forth" by His word to the Father's glory?

The end of the chapter furnishes a practical comment on these two parables. The Lord is seen with His disciples in the ship launched forth amid troublous waters: "And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship: and there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full." There they are amid all the confusion of the tempest; the waves breaking over them, Satan striving to

destroy the testimony. And where was He? Look at this picture of peaceful calm in such a scene! The One who "had nowhere to lay his head" had found a resting-place in the midst of the raging storm: "He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow." He was taking no outwardly active part in the management of the ship. He was truly *with* them, as a matter of fact, and they all knew it; but He seemed to see nothing that was going on, nor to know it; He said nothing to still the wind, nor was He disturbed by the boisterous waves; yet they saw the water were filling the ship, while He, in the hinder part of it, was asleep, taking no apparent notice of the dangers around.

And what were *they* doing? Had they not already forgotten the parable of the seed cast into the ground? "They awake him, and say to him: Master, *carest* thou not that we perish?" Just think of what these words imply! "Carest thou not!" It was impugning His thoughts of love for them; it was making nothing of all their experience of His care and affection. But more: it betrays their utter want of trust in Him, their practical insensibility to His being with them. If you were to read this part of the history to one who did not know the passage, leaving out the first part of verse 38, and were to ask him, Where was the Lord at this time? the natural answer would be: Oh, of course, He was in

heaven, and they were offering up a prayer to Him there; they speak as if they were apart from Him altogether. But He rises at their request, rebukes the wind, and says to the sea: "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And then He says to them: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have *no* faith?" In Matthew He says, "*little* faith;" here it is, "*no* faith." Did not His words burn into their hearts, making their consciences say, on His behalf: You have doubted my love; you have doubted that I was "caring" for you; you have thought that, somehow or another, you would go down, and that I should leave you to go down—*leave* you to "perish." Was that all the practical result to them of having been "ordained to be *with him*," that He might send them forth to preach? Alas, what hearts are ours! How slow to receive, how ready to let slip, the sense of His perfect love!

And when He had done it, did they say, Well, this is just what we might have expected? No; strange to say, "They feared *exceedingly*, and said one to another, What manner of man is this?" There is no communion here. If there had been communion with Him, would they not have found in Himself an all-sufficient reason for feeling perfectly safe, and sheltered from the enemy's power? Could their trouble have another result than in a fresh miracle, shewing them

again the might of His power, and the activity of His love? Would not their hearts have at least taken the cue from the unruffled calm in which He was sleeping? The raging billows were no hindrance to His finding a little moment of rest from His active service. And in what a scene! Every human heart was filled with turmoil and fear of death; *He* was at rest, enjoying peaceful sleep; and He was *with them*. Should not His presence have been sufficient for them?

I am convinced that we shall find more and more, through grace, that this blessed fact of the Lord's presence with His own is to be the starting-point for our souls in everything. If it is a question of the church, He says: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Supposing that an assembly is professedly and truly gathered to His name (I do not, of course, speak of any manifested evil there, or suppose it), am I to find out, *first*, what its moral condition is, in order to know whether the Lord may be there? That would be to act as did the disciples. Satan's power may be, and is, displayed against it; the ship may be full of water; but I am to start with the fact that *He is there*. That will produce individual exercise of heart and conscience, that everything is *in* me, *of* me, and *about* me, may be characterised by that presence. It is to be the starting-point of all my thoughts.

There we shall find the needed balance for our souls as we go through this world. Impossible it is, surely, for mere man to pass safely through it, with such an enemy as Satan in constant activity, going about, seeking whom he may devour. But the presence of the Lord with His own changes everything. What is impossible for man is possible with God;* and so we may fearlessly meet every difficulty, knowing that the Lord is with us, and that the storm is just the occasion for the manifestation of His active grace. Thus may we not lose courage; thus may our hearts rest in the blessed certainty that God is carrying out His own work of grace, both individually and collectively, and that Christ is waiting for His harvest-day—the day when His heart will be satisfied in the perfect blessing of His own—satisfied in the delight of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will, who “rests in his love,” and who, when all is finished, ushers us, too, into His rest—“the rest which remaineth for the people of God.” (W. J. L.)

* Compare the “*all things are possible*” of Mark ix. 23, and x. 27. It is “*with God*,” and the one who believes experiences it.