

# “Our Calling”

  

## VOLUME I

  


“Ye are called in one hope of your calling.”

(Eph. iv. 4.)

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# Our Calling.

(F. B. HOLE).

WE invite the attention of our readers to the very important and comprehensive subject of *the Christian calling*. In using the term "our calling" we do not mean the general call of God to mankind, sounding loud and clear in the gospel to-day (see Prov. I. 20-26), nor do we confine it to that effectual call which in the Spirit's power reaches the souls of God's elect (see Rom. VIII. 28), but rather to that peculiar position of relationship and privilege in the divine economy, with its corresponding responsibilities, to which all Christians have been designated by the sovereign will of God.

When God called Abraham out from the nations He designated him to a place of peculiar privilege. He stands the primary witness to separation by God's call, and thus becomes the father of the faithful and founder of the henceforth acknowledged line of faith, and the root of the olive tree of promise (Rom. XI. 17-24). God called him *individually*, but with future expansion in view.

God called his descendants out of Egypt, designated them to a position of nearness to Himself, to a land of special fruitfulness, and to a corresponding position of testimony to His name amongst the heathen. Theirs was a national call.

The Christian calling, in which all saints of this present dispensation—beginning with Pentecost and ending with the coming of the Lord—share, is connected not with earth, but with heaven. In it God has designated us to relationships, privileges, hopes, and responsibilities inconceivably great. Our calling, though it reaches us individually, is not on individual nor even on national lines. It is of a *corporate* character. We are called "*in one body*" (Col. III. 15).

We will in this brief paper call attention to three cardinal facts.

1. There is but *one* Christian calling. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are *called* in *one* hope of your *calling*" (Eph. IV. 4). "Our calling" is not sectarian. There is no such thing in Scripture as a special "calling" belonging to a particular class or a special company of Christians. Some Christians understand their calling better than others, and walk, perhaps, more fully in the truth of it, shaping their conduct so as to be consistent with it, but this is in no sense a different calling.

2. The Christian calling *abides* whatever else may go. In the epistle which specially contemplates the "last days" of the church's history on earth and



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the "perilous times" which accompany them, we find a strong and clear note sounded as to it: "God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. i. 9).

This scripture plainly lifts the Christian calling on to a very exalted plane. It stands severed from earth and time and sense, and connected with heaven and eternity and the whole realm of spiritual realities which centre in Christ Jesus, the risen and exalted Man of God's purpose. Saints upon earth may come and go; tides of evil may roll in; revivals, God-given, may wax and wane; the last great apostasy, as predicted, may rear its head: "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" abides as ever and shines undimmed in lustre for those who have eyes to see.

3. Our calling is intended to *govern* all Christian life and conduct. Ours is a heavenly calling, and we are saints by calling, that is the name by which God has designated us. The first occurrence of the word "called" in Scripture is in Genesis i. 5: "And God called the light Day." Day has been its name ever since.

The second occurrence of the word is in Genesis ii. 19. Before Adam — God's vice-regent — are brought the living creatures, and

we read: "Whatsoever Adam called . . . *that* was the name thereof."

It is thus with the call of God. What we are by divine call, WE ARE. Nothing can alter it, neither failure nor breakdown nor defective state on our side. The way to uplift defective state is to get into the light of the calling. The practical state of Christians does not affect their calling. Their practical acknowledgment of their calling will affect their state.

4. These fundamental yet simple considerations must surely make us feel the immense importance of our calling. They should make us earnestly desirous of learning it as God has presented it to us in all its various aspects in His Word.

Let us beware of a mere textual acquaintance with it in order that we may pride ourselves on our position, apart from an exercised conscience as to whether or no we practically answer to it in the power of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, let us not become so occupied with our degree of attainment that we allow our subjective state to eclipse God's objective calling. Rather, putting things in their right place and order, let us afresh study our calling that we may judge ourselves and our ways in the light of it, and answer to it by the grace of our God.

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## Excerpts.

**HOLD**      *We are in the last times ;*  
**FAST**      *the state of the church being*  
**THAT**      *witness ; all the more need to*  
**WHICH**      *hold fast to God's thoughts as*  
**THOU**      *to this, and seek to be in the*  
**HAST.**      *recognition of the fact that*  
                *we are a poor and afflicted*

*people, who in conscious weakness have the name of the Lord as our resource, the word of God as our guide, the Spirit of God as our only power, and the truth of the church as Christ's body, God's house, God's temple, and Christ's bride as a sacred deposit we are to maintain in all its integrity.*

**WRIT-**      *Those who were first gathered to*  
**TEN IN**      *the Lord simply as His*  
**1849.**      *saints understood, in some*  
                *measure at least, what the*  
                *church is as the habitation*  
                *of God through the Spirit ;*  
*they saw its heavenly calling as the*  
*bride of Christ ; their souls compassed*  
*the truths learned through deep exer-*  
*cise of heart and conscience.*

*They went forth without the camp ; the world was left behind. In conscious weakness they assumed to be nothing more than the representative*  
**GOD IS**      *of the present weakness of*  
**CALLING**      *the church.*

**US BACK**      *In their meetings there*  
**TO THIS**      *was simple dependence on*  
**IN 1911.**      *God ; the sweet fragrance of*  
                *the name of Jesus was*  
*enough, they were intent to enjoy Christ*  
*together.*

**GOD'S**      *We need to understand*  
**DESIGN.**      *what the will of the Lord*  
                *is ; not merely with refer-*  
                *ence to our personal walk, as individ-*  
                *uals, but according to the design of*  
                *God concerning the church, and the*  
                *character of its testimony in these*  
                *difficult times. Faith will find its path*

*with the Living God as much now as ever, wrecked as all around may be.*

**INNATE** *life will surely draw to-*  
*gether those who have it, and those*  
*who fear the Lord will speak often to-*  
*gether in an evil day.*

**THE** *witness of the church has been*  
*completely lost ; it has left its first*  
*love and lost its true place on earth ;*  
*its heavenly light and lustre have been*  
*obscured. The point is, What re-*  
*mains ?*

**SCRIPTURE** *remains to the end, the*  
*alone perfect standard. It calls for*  
*individual fidelity to the truth when the*  
*professing mass has departed from it.*

**IF** *we cannot put the Church right*  
*we can put ourselves right, and as*  
*others are seeking to do so our feet*  
*will be found together.*

**CHRIST** *its living Head abides ; and*  
*the church as His body abides, and*  
*will abide to the end.*

**LET** *us seek to walk in the truth of*  
*this, and we shall be a pleasure to Him,*  
*even if external testimony to its unity*  
*is no more.*

**ABHOR** *that which is evil, cleave to*  
*that which is good. Let this holy*  
*abhorrence of evil ever be carried out*  
*in the spirit of that word, " considering*  
*thyself lest thou also be tempted." Let*  
*this cleaving to good never partake*  
*of that spirit which says, " Stand off,*  
*I am holier than thou."*

**FLESH** *is flesh, whether it be trained*  
*in the court, sensitive, pathetic, deli-*  
*cate ; or wild in the wood, rough, rude,*  
*grasping ; but flesh has been judged*  
*at the cross, and is to find no place in*  
*the church.*

**Let** *the finger of self-judgment ever*  
*be held on that which God judged when*  
*forsaking Christ—your flesh and mine.*

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## Service.

(Address by THOMAS OLIVER).

I WANT to say a word to the young, the rising generation, among us. I will read Ephesians iv. 7-16.

If God saves us He claims us, and He *claims* us according to the relationships in which He in His grace sets us. There are two great relationships in Christianity, the family relationship and the church relationship. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26). Then in Romans xii. 5 we read: "So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."

If God has saved us it is that each saved one should *serve* Him with intelligence in these two relationships. Remember that in serving God *all natural means are valueless*. The prophet "UNTO EVERY ONE OF US IS GIVEN GRACE ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF THE GIFT OF CHRIST." Zechariah, in chapter iv. 6, is very emphatic as to this. He says, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." In the scripture I have read the gifts given are enumerated. The gift of "grace" is given to *every* Christian. In the eleventh verse it is not so, the gifts are more restricted, but *all* the gifts are given that they may be found in exercise. In connection with this last point there are, I think, two essentials necessary for true service. One is, that the *object* for which the gift has been given must be always kept in mind, and the other that *preparation* is needed for the exercise of the gift.

As to the object for which the gifts have been given, verse 12 is our one sure and only guide. This is the grand *end* God has in His mind. I beg of you never to forget it.

"FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS, FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST." Sinners in their sins, in the quarry of nature, have to be sought out, but in believing they become saints, living stones to be built up a spiritual house (1 Peter ii. 3-5).

The gift of "grace" should surely be seen in uninterrupted exercise in every brother and sister, in every circle of relationship and responsibility.

We come now to the gifts of pastors, teachers, and evangelists in verse 11, and here, *all men* and *all saints* must be kept in view. *All men* because God

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will have *all* men to be saved, and all saints because every saint is a member of the body of Christ.

Of the great Apostle Paul it is said in the first chapter to the Colossians that he was minister of the *gospel* and minister of the *church*. The *gospel* relates to what a Saviour-God is for *us*. The *church* or the *mystery* relates to what God the Father in His eternal counsels purposed for His Son, as compensation for all His devotedness in life and in death. We also must hold both to the *gospel* and to the *church*. It is fatal to separate them. Through grace we must keep the balance, otherwise we shall miss the mind of our Lord in bestowing the gifts. Our danger, *and it is a very real one*, lies in being *one-sided* in our service. To be almost exclusively taken up with the *church* is to become narrowed in our sympathies, and it is very often accompanied with a wretched spirit of fatalism, the death-blow to all importunate prayer and devoted service. On the other hand, to be almost, if not altogether, taken up with the *gospel* *may* prove fatal in other ways. We may thus miss the *whole* counsel of God. Undue prominence given to this line of things often leads in its later stages to a false presentation of the love of God. It is a glorious fact that "God is love"—but "God is light" also. If we lose sight of this and the gravity of sin as seen at the cross wrong thoughts as to the eternal Son and as to the atonement are apt to creep in, or the dread doom of those who die in their sins is modified or even actually denied. Humanity, in its dire distress and need, so engrosses some that God's holiness is set aside and He is wrongly declared to be too merciful to inflict eternal punishment on any soul under any circumstances. Thus the AWFUL SIN of refusing to submit to God and take refuge in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who poured out His soul unto death on the behalf of every sinner, loses its *proper place* in the mind. Slighting God's grace fills up the measure of man's sin.

For the preparation of the servant for service I turn to Isaiah vi. and read verses 5-8.

In this remarkable passage we find the Throne, the Altar, and the Victim—the Son of God is all three. The twelfth chapter of John, verse 41, makes this plain: "These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." How this brings before us the sacred majesty of our precious Saviour! In verse 1 of Isaiah vi. it is written: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train

*Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

*Then flew one of the seraphims unto me,*

having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:

And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

filled the temple." Then in verse 5: "For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." What an all-absorbing object for our souls.

As far as I know, the cherubim have to do with the throne of God and its claims. The seraphim more with the nature of God, as light and love. Thus these latter are seen in this scripture celebrating His holiness with their thrice repeated cry, "Holy, holy, holy," is the Lord of hosts. They veil their faces and cover their feet as they cry one to another, "The whole earth is full of His glory." In verse 6 it is one of these burning and shining beings who flies unto Isaiah TO PREPARE HIM FOR SERVICE. He had in his hand a *live* coal taken from off the altar. He lays it upon Isaiah's mouth and says, "Lo, *this* hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." I think the live coal from off the altar is a token that the fire was doing its work. A memorial also of the dying love of the Holy Victim, from the very spot where the fire of God's righteous judgment fell upon His well-beloved Son, and *our* great Substitute, that we might not only be relieved of all the consequences of our sin and guilt, but be brought into the everlasting favour of His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

Isaiah then hears the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" This word "*us*" is mentioned in Genesis I. 26: "Let *us* make man." This was in connection with creation. Then in Luke xv. 23: "Let *us* eat, and be merry," is in connection with salvation; and here in Isaiah vi. 8, "Who will go for *us*?" is in connection with service. In each case the "*us*" takes in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Who can wonder at the ready way in which Isaiah placed his services at the disposal of the blessed God, saying, "Here am I; send me"?

To-day, as then, God needs messengers, servants, vessels "sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." First of all, living for Him, with the gift of "*grace*" in daily exercise, and then out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaking of Him and His love. God deigns to use His saints as His instrumental means of bringing eternal blessing to the lost and of building up His saints in their most holy faith. The sufficiency is His. The power is His. What inconceivable dignity to be a servant of God!

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But the preparation spoken of is needed *for* this. Paul was in the secret of the live coal, taken from off the altar, when he said, "The Son of God, who loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*." Mary of Bethany was in the secret, and it was at His feet she learned it (Luke x. 39), so that at the fitting moment, in view of His death, she served her Lord, "and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (John xii. 3). Are you in the secret? If not, rest not until you too go forth from the very heart of Christ, in all the liberty in which grace sets you, and in all the fervour and glow of the story of Calvary, and in the power of the Spirit, to seek to gather out of the world those who shall form His body and His bride, that church He loved and gave Himself for.

## Alone. Not Alone.

(Address by J. A. TRENCU).

JOHN XII. 24; XX. 17-23. EPH. III. 1-11; V. 25-32. REV. XIX. 6-9; XXI. 1, 2.

*I have read John XII. 24 "EXCEPT specially because of the word "alone" in it. It is a wonderful thought that the Lord Jesus should speak of being alone; it tells out the deep reality of His love to us, unfolds one reason for His going down to death. The precious seed of corn fell into the ground and died that He might be no longer alone, but that there should be a rich harvest of fruit for Him, in the way in which, as the result of His death, He could have us with Himself.*

*Let us look at some aspects of the position in which He was alone, and then how His heart is satisfied in being no longer alone.*

*A scene of ineffable delight, and where we might have little expected to find it, is in Proverbs VIII. We are carried back before the foundations of the earth were laid, to find wisdom with Jehovah, or as we can say in the full light that now shines,*

*the Son with the Father. "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." What divine communion of divine joy, each sufficing for the other! And yet we are allowed to know that the heart of divine love was going out to the habitable parts of a yet uncreated world. "My delights were with the sons of men" (vers. 22-31). Alone with the Father daily His delight, in that scene of communion of perfect love, He shared His Father's thoughts and counsels as to the sons of men.*

*To give effect to the purposes of divine love we hear Him say, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God." Thus in the body prepared for Him we find Him entering upon the path of the accomplishment of that will. His birth was celebrated by the heavenly hosts: "Glory to God in the highest: peace upon earth, and good pleasure in men." "MEN"; not merely One become Man to be the object of the Father's perfect pleasure. We may*

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well ask, Where were others to be found beside Him for such a place? The opened heavens proclaim the place He had as Man before His Father: "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." A Man had

A  
MAN AP-  
PROVED  
OF GOD.

been found upon earth for the first time to answer perfectly to the heart of God as the object of His delight.

The more we follow Him in His lowly path, the more we feel how utterly He was alone in it, and that by His very perfection of obedience and dependence and devotedness of love to the Father, ever governed only by His glory. How absolute the contrast to every other man!

Once again, on the Mount of Transfiguration, we hear such a voice from the excellent glory claiming Him as Man perfectly suited to that glory. None could have disputed His title to step from the mount into it. But what then would have become of the divine counsels? Where were the men of good pleasure? where the sons of men in whom He was to find His delight?

He comes down from the  
NOT mount to die. And the  
ALONE verse with which we began  
IN interprets that wonderful de-  
GLORY. scent for us. He would not

be alone in His glory as Man for ever. His heart, filled with love to such as we, led Him to the cross, that in resurrection He might be able to take us up into His own position as the risen Man. This begins to open to us in John XX. Heard from the transpiercing horns of divine judgment, according to Psalm XXII. His very first thought is, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren," whom He can now first own in such relationship. From the mouth of the open sepulchre the full declaration of it is made: "Go to My

brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." It is all His own place, with God and with the Father, which He enters into in a new way as Man in resurrection. As the result of redemption, He can associate us with Himself in that wonderful circle of divine relationships. He is no longer alone. He had been alone in them in all His pathway here, in that one solitary track of light across the darkness of the world.

Yet deeper still, in a way beyond all our thought, He had been alone on the cross. In His life up to it He could say, "The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him." But the whole

question of sin had to be  
SIN taken up and met in the  
MET only way in which it could  
FOR be met for God's glory. It  
GOD'S was necessary for the glory  
GLORY. of God that He should now

pass out of the experience of communion with His Father, which had been all the light and joy of His path here, into the experience of being infinitely abandoned of God. Gethsemane makes us know something of what the immensity of the sorrow was to Him as He presents it before His Father. But none can penetrate the darkness of those three hours, when the anguish of what His soul was passing through was expressed in the agonized cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But He was alone in the unfathomable sorrow and darkness, in which sin's judgment was borne, now for ever past for God and for faith.

Now He enters into the light and joy, but never again to be alone in it, He can associate His own with Himself in the light and joy into which He has entered.

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There is the assembly  
 SINGS now, in the midst of which,  
 PRAISES on the platform of resur-  
 IN THE rection, He can take His  
 MIDST. place to lead us in the sing-  
 ing that suits that place of  
 light and joy. It was His own place.  
 "I will sing praise"; but the song  
 that suits Him suits us now, for whom  
 He suffered. "In the midst of the  
 assembly will I sing praise unto  
 thee."

But I want to look further into the  
 details of that wonderful day that has  
 dawned for us in His resurrection, that  
 we may learn more fully the character  
 and fullness of our association with  
 the risen One. He salutes them with  
 the peace He had made for them, Him-  
 self the first preacher of it, while He  
 commissions them to carry it forth to  
 others. And now He breathes on them,  
 and says unto them, "Receive ye  
 [not "the," as we have it] Holy  
 Spirit." It was not yet "the promise  
 of the Father" (Acts I. 4), the Holy  
 Spirit given to dwell in them. For  
 that they had yet to wait till the day  
 of Pentecost; and it is helpful for us  
 to be able to distinguish. It is the  
 Spirit as the power of life in Christ  
 Jesus. As God breathed  
 IMPARTS into Adam's nostrils the  
 LIFE AS breath of life, natural life;  
 THE so, standing out in all the  
 RISEN mighty triumph of accom-  
 MAN. plished redemption, He who  
 had ever quickened whom  
 He would now, as last Adam, brings  
 them into possession of life as it never  
 existed before; that is, in Himself as  
 risen, past every question of sin, death,  
 the judgment of God, and the power of  
 Satan. Thus He sets them in His  
 own place, by a life of peace, of liberty  
 and power, and of divine relationship,  
 to be known and enjoyed by the power  
 of the Spirit; such as they saw in  
 Him those forty days He was with  
 them before His ascension.

But the fact of the ascension forms  
 no part of John's testimony. His  
 epistles are the doctrinal continuation  
 to us of the life once manifested in all  
 its perfection in Him, and now true  
 in Him and in us, with the precious  
 relationships that belong to that life,  
 and the divine nature inseparable  
 from it now to be manifested in its  
 moral traits in us.

All is so far individual in the as-  
 sociation we have been brought into  
 with Him who is the first-born among  
 many brethren. But there is besides  
 all that which was as yet wrapped up  
 in the heart of God from all eternity—the  
 mystery "which from the begin-  
 ning of the world hath been  
 THE hid in God," according to  
 MYSTERY. the verses read in Ephe-  
 sians, "which in other  
 ages was not made known unto the  
 sons of men," but is now revealed,  
 through a vessel raised up for the  
 wonderful unfolding of the harvest of  
 fruit that sprang up from the corn  
 of wheat that died.

There had been no hint of the mystery  
 in all Scripture till it was found in  
 germ in the words by which the Lord  
 Jesus revealed Himself to Saul of  
 Tarsus. In his mad enmity against  
 Christ, a light above the brightness of  
 the sun broke him down to the ground;  
 and he heard a voice saying unto him,  
 "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou  
 Me?" All the truth of the mystery  
 was involved in that "ME." "I am  
 Jesus, whom thou persecutest." It was  
 thus revealed that those hated followers  
 of His were united to the ascended  
 Christ in glory.

This new work had begun at Pente-  
 cost. By one Spirit they had all been  
 baptized into one body (I Cor. XII. 13),  
 but no one knew anything about it  
 until it began to be revealed in Paul's  
 conversion, and in the subsequent com-  
 munications in which the Lord ap-  
 peared to him.



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WHAT *What has been the effect upon us, beloved brethren, if indeed the light of the mystery has broken upon our hearts? Do we really believe that we have been brought into this wonderful relationship with Christ as Head of His body the church, members of the body of Christ, and so members one of another? He is not alone in His glory indeed. By the Spirit come from that glory, and dwelling in all who have received the glad tidings of salvation, we are every one of us, out of every kindred and tongue and nation, united to Him in glory, now to derive everything from Him.*

UNION *Again I ask, Are we living daily in the sense of WITH union with Christ? And CHRIST. how does it affect our relations with our fellow-members of His body, wherever they are to be found upon earth? It is an actually subsisting unity by the Spirit who formed it; and it is our responsibility to seek to realize it with all saints in the power of the Spirit (Eph. iv. 3, 4).*

*But it is just the thought of its immense bearing upon all our practical walk that leads the Apostle to the prayer of the end of chapter III. It was his ministry not only to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, but to make all see what is the administration (a larger word than fellowship)—that is, all that pertains to the practical carrying out—of the mystery. But before he can go on to speak of it he betakes himself to prayer for all that is needed to empower us for such a path. "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" according to the riches of His glory; "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith"; He who was the object and centre of*

THE *all God's counsels from SCOPE OF eternity. That the illimit- DIVINE able scope of those coun- COUNSELS. sels might open out more and more to us, and the love of Christ, which is just as illimitable, for all the fullness of God is expressed in that love. Oh that we might get our hearts so enlarged as to be lifted above any little narrow circle we might feel special interest in, to take in what the assembly is in the fullness of God's thoughts.*

*There is yet one other precious aspect of the way that Christ is no longer alone. It is not that it is another relationship of the assembly to Him, but that it has not been enough for Him to present it to us as a body united to its Head. It has not sufficiently expressed the deep and peculiar place we have in His love. Therefore it is that when the Apostle begins to speak of how our walk in the natural relationships of life are to be affected by the divine and heavenly ones into which we have been introduced, and begins with the dearest and most intimate—that of*

THE *husband and wife—the CHURCH Spirit seizes the oppor- A BRIDE tunity to bring out what the AS WELL assembly is to the heart of AS A Christ. "Husbands, love BODY. your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"—all that His heart can delight in for ever. What connects the assembly as members of His body with the place of wife in His love is then illustrated from the original institution of marriage. Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself.*

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When God presented Eve to Adam, he could say, "She is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." No man ever yet hated his own flesh; and so no detail of tender nourishing and cherishing is wanting upon Christ's part to the assembly which He owns as Himself. "The mystery is great; but I speak concerning Christ and the assembly" (ver. 32).

To the last passages I read we must go for the full result of all this in glory. Revelation XIX. gives us from 6-9 the marriage supper of the Lamb. He has presented the assembly to Himself as a glorious assembly, and He celebrates His espousals with her in

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB. heavenly glory, that she may share with Him the kingdom when He reigns. At first sight we might be surprised that the heavenly marriage had not taken place earlier in the book. But in the wisdom of God the earth had first to be cleared, by the most terrific judgment, recorded in the book, of that which had falsely assumed the place and relationship of the bride of Christ, before He publicly owns His true bride. And then she is ready to come out, arrayed in that which had been from first to last the fruit of His grace in her, as if it were her own, for the displayed glory of the kingdom, as given us in chapter XXI. 9-XXII. 7.

Yet there is something for Christ beyond all the glory in which as the Lamb's wife He will display her in the kingdom. We find it in the brief account of the eternal state in chapter XXII. 1-8. A new heaven and new earth, according to God's own nature, has succeeded to the heaven and the earth which has been the scene of all His ways and government. The assembly's relationships, whether with Christ as His bride or with God as His dwelling-place, are eternal. But

I only dwell on the exceeding sweetness of the one notice of the first. The holy city, new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. More than one thousand years have passed since the

ETERNAL DELIGHT OF THE BRIDE-GROOM IN THE BRIDE. nuptials, but it is reserved for eternity itself to disclose her to us as a bride in the unchanging freshness of the love of Christ. Moreover, it is not the glory for display that is in His thoughts. She is "as a bride adorned for her husband," for His own eye and heart alone.

The Lord give us to enter a little more into the abounding grace of the word of the Lord with which we began. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth ALONE." Now we are given to know something of what it involves for us, that He is not alone in glory; and that such is the character of the association and relationship into which He has brought us with Himself, that there is no position in which He will ever be found as Man in which we shall not be with Him, to His own glory and joy and praise for ever.

THE children of the bride-chamber fast during the Bridegroom's absence because He is dear to them. Weaned from other objects by the supreme attraction of His person, they wait to see the One who is to them fairer than the children of men, and as they wait their abstention declares their affections have travelled outside this scene, they are inconsolable until He appear.

Children when far away may long  
For home and kindred dear,  
And she that loves her absent Lord  
Must grieve till He appear.

## The Lord's Presence.

## The Lord's Supper.

(J. B. STONE).

WHAT do you expect in coming to a morning meeting? I expect to meet the Lord. Very good, but do you really count upon *enjoying His presence*? How will you know you are in His presence? The answer is simple. If you are really, consciously in His presence *nothing else will occupy you but Himself*. What can exceed the joy of being in the presence of the Son of God!

You may sit at the Lord's table, you may surround the emblems of His sorrow, but if there is a soil on your spirit, an unjudged sin; if during the week your walk and ways have been unsuited to the holiness of God and have carried these things unjudged into the Lord's presence, the light will detect it, and instead of being happy you will be miserable.

Fitness—moral fitness—flows from bringing the death of Christ to bear upon ourselves. He identified Himself with us in death and has relieved us of it; we now accept His death. Keep the finger of self-judgment on everything that death has had to say to us. Herein lies the secret of the soul's enjoyment of the Lord's presence.

CHRIST is the leader of praises to the Father, our eyes are to be upon Him, our wills and actions in true subjection. If we lay hold of this it will deeply exercise us to seek to be near enough to Him to add our chorus to His song.

THE Romanist will tell you the "real presence" is in the bread and wine. Others regard it as a means of grace; yet others as a way of salvation.

"Ah," you say, "I do not regard it in that light." How do you regard it then? The effect the Supper has on me is, that my heart is drawn out in the sense of His love in dying for me; I eat it recalling Himself; I am not occupied with my sins, but with the *One who has put them away by the sacrifice of Himself*.

This I do, as *consciously one with Him in resurrection*, on the heavenly side of Jordan, the visible bread and wine, like the stones *outside*, reminding me of the stones lying *inside* the river's bed. I am in life remembering the One who went into death. At the Lord's table I am calling Him to mind in His death; *remembering Him* who has done it all.

CHRIST is the guiding, controlling Head in the assembly. If He directs me to give out a hymn it then comes from the Head, not from me. I must not give it out because I have enjoyed it at home before coming, because when gathered I lose my individuality and must give out only that *which is in harmony with His mind for the whole company*.

## Our Calling

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## Helps by the Way.

(W. BARKER).

OUR dear brother Dr. Wolston has just addressed us in very encouraging and stimulating words—exhorting us to wholly follow the Lord as Caleb did. This, I trust, is the desire and purpose of every heart. None of us, perhaps, would care to say with Caleb that we had fully followed the Lord. We shrink from saying so; but if, in a day to come, He should be able to say it of us, how happy it will be.

The passage which we have just read together—Hebrews IV. 11-16—reminds us of certain helps by the way for those who would wholly follow the Lord. This chapter and the preceding one form together a distinct section of the epistle, in which we are viewed as belonging to the pilgrim band, out of Egypt and journeying towards the heavenly Canaan—the true rest of God. Israel of old was not placed under the shelter of the blood that they might afterwards find a home in Egypt, nor were they taken across the Red Sea that they might settle down in the wilderness. God was going to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey. But the wilderness had to be crossed—“that land of deserts and of pits, of drought and of the shadow of death.” And there they would be tested. It was not to be quite a triumphant march. Amalek would oppose their progress, difficulties would confront them which only faith could conquer, and circumstances of a discouraging nature would sometimes have to be faced. But in all these they should prove the all-sufficiency of Jehovah their God if they would but trust Him. And their history is written for our admonition. For we, too, if we would reach Canaan must walk the road that leads there—and against an evil heart of unbelief we have to watch even as they.

Three things are specially named here that are for our help: the Word of God—living, powerful, energetic—the priesthood of Christ, and the throne of grace. But if we are to profit by these our faces must be in the right direction, there must be no turning back in heart to Egypt. Like Caleb, we must be set on wholly following the Lord.

First, the Word of God is living and operative. In its action it is that. It searches us through and through; exposes by its clear searching the very thoughts and intents of the heart, making everything manifest as under the eye of Him with whom we have to do. We should welcome this. “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,” must be our constant cry. How thankful we ought to be to have everything detected that

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would impede our progress so that we might judge it and lay it aside as a weary weight. "By the words of Thy lips have I kept me from the paths of the destroyer." A runner in the race would not hamper himself with weights, nor would a pilgrim on his journey exhaust his strength by burdens worse than useless. The Word of God is intended to preserve us from such hindrances and evils.

Secondly, "we have a great high Priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He Himself, in the days of His flesh, trod the path of faith and knows—apart from sin—all that is found therein. And though He has passed through the heavens, our great Forerunner does not forget His pilgrim followers. He sympathizes with them, succours them in the hour of their distress, and ever lives to bring them safely through even to the very uttermost. There is joy and strength in knowing this. Be of good cheer then. Let us remember that the One who has purged our sins and fitted us for the courts of the heavenly sanctuary lives for us on high to maintain our cause. He is not so far removed from us that He cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. He knows and loves and cares. Pluck up courage then, dear fainting pilgrim! Jesus lives!

Thirdly, there is the throne of grace, to which we are encouraged to come with boldness, to obtain mercy and gracious help in every time of need. It is a *throne* to which we come, suggestive of holy government always exercised for the glory of God and the blessing of His redeemed. But if a throne, it is a throne of *grace* and not of judgment. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." To that throne then we may *boldly* come, not doubtfully or tremblingly, as if our calls were too frequent, our needs too many, and our weaknesses more than might be borne with. There mercy is freely and richly dispensed, and there help is always to be had suited to every emergency and to every case. Here are provisions indeed for the pilgrim band in their wilderness journey towards the rest that remains. Here is wine to cheer and bread to stay for all who would wholly follow the Lord.

MAN'S necessity as a sinner, and the manifestation of the divine glory, find their one and only meeting-point in the cross of Christ.

The glory is before us as our immediate hope, that glory into which Jesus has already entered.

IF we fail to walk in the Spirit, and allow the flesh to work, the moral government of God comes in to prevent our sinking down to the world's level; we are chastened of the Lord that we might not be condemned with the world.

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### Fear.

(Address by E. Cross).

MALACHI III. 16, 17.

IN Ezra v. 1 we read that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the remnant to go on and build. The people were cast down by the opposition of their adversaries and by the sight of the city and the house of God in ruins, so that the work of the house of God ceased for a time and nothing was being done, until the people were again stirred up, "and with them the prophets of God helping them." Zechariah pictures to them the re-establishment of the glorious system of the Messiah, in colours as bright as does "the golden prophet" Isaiah himself in his highest strain; while Haggai tells them that the latter glory of the house would be greater than the former glory, and assures them that God's Spirit remained with them, so that they were no longer to occupy themselves building their own houses, on the plea that the time for building the Lord's house had not come.

Malachi's prophecy is about 120 years after these, and he portrays the *state of the people*—what they had come to during that period. It is a lamentable picture. Never whole-hearted or devoted at any time, a "stiff-necked people" from the days of Moses, the little revival on their

return from Babylon had simmered away into a godless condition that would be incredible had we not experience of a similar spirit working in our own day.

It is no longer the instruction of a people in the great principles that form the framework of the glorious system of a theocracy, nor of the details of the service of God in His sanctuary. What lay upon the prophet's heart was the total and contemptuous absence of "the fear of God," in feeling and in fact, from every transaction in which they were engaged, from the greatest to the least, in things religious and things secular, in matters of public worship and of private life. Eight times the Lord rebukes them for their ungodly ways, and eight times they answer, "Wherein have we been ungodly?" (cf. I. 2, 6, 7; II. 14, 17; III. 7, 8, 13). They were in "the transgression of the wicked" described by David (Ps. xxxvi. 1); "there is no fear of God before his eyes."

It is this word "fear" that characterizes the book of Malachi—"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"—and without it there is no understanding; and there can be no higher ex-

ponent of its virtue than He of whom it is written, He "was heard in that He feared" (Heb. v. 7).

It was characteristic of Abraham when the Lord interfered swiftly to stay the knife that was about to slay Isaac; and, coupled with obedience (Gen. xxii. 12, 18), moved God to swear that He would extend his blessing beyond all human thought; and the same two principles are singled out again in Haggai i. 12 as securing the presence and power of God to the remnant. The lack of this godly fear is the lever of all wickedness, the cause of judgments proportionate thereto.

"If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest FEAR this glorious and *fear-ful* name, The Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful. . . ." (Deut. xxviii. 58, 59).

This is just the condition of things described by Malachi. This is just the controversy that God had with His professing people then; it is just the controversy He has to-day.

Sometimes people are confused by a wrong use of 1 John iv. 18: "Perfect love casteth out fear," i.e. the slavish fear of the unregenerate or unenlightened soul, not standing in the grace of God (Rom. v. 2). All such fear the love of God made known

in the soul removes. But the same gospel that removes all guilty fear tells us also: "If ye call on Him, as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter i. 17); and when the fear of God is supreme in the soul no other fear can enter (Luke xii. 4-7).

This fear, then, is a leading trait in Malachi (cf. i. 6; ii. 5; iii. 5, 16; iv. 2). It appears in every chapter. The lack of it wrought all kinds of horrible enormities amongst the people then, as it does to-day. In chapter ii. 14-16 the principles of socialism in the destruction of matrimonial bonds were rife among them then. In fact, all true social and domestic as well as religious relationships, from God down to the very children in the family, are destroyed by the selfish principles of an ungodly socialism. And in its insidious evil spirit it seems not only to possess the mass of the unprofessing world, but to be sweeping into its fatal net the great mass of the professing people of God.

Everything was corrupted down to the bottom, which would bring down a curse from the Lord. Everything from the bottom upwards will be re-established in Christ, for blessing beyond all thought, earthly, heavenly, temporal, and eternal.

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## Excerpts.

A TRUE sense of the abiding love of Jesus is that which not only becomes the stay of the heart, but produces responsive affection in us.

We shall never find defect in the object of our affections, though often in the affections themselves.

We love Him because He first loved us ; the one love is changing and fickle, the other constant and abiding.

Our love is oftentimes cold, but the love of Jesus is changeless and eternal. HE IS THE SAME YESTERDAY, AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.

Both these titles tell of joy, but they answer one to the other ; and the savour of either one is more peculiarly for the other. Be the company in which they shall be seen divine as the Father's, or below as of angels, or of the world when the display is made that she is loved as He is loved—still they have a joy in one another's love. Each needs the other.

What means the title Bridegroom, without a bride ? or what is the bride apart from the Bridegroom ?

Where is joy to equal that of the marriage of the Lamb ?

Oh ! for more understanding of our espousals ! for a fuller flow of bridal affections ! !

The Spirit dwelling in us gives the consciousness of relationship before the day of espousals in glory, and forms the Church's affections according to that relationship ; Christ becomes the first object of her heart when known as the Bridegroom in the power of the Spirit.

As the strict and uncompromising maintenance of truth tends to narrow the circle in these evil days, how greatly we need the expansive power of grace to keep the heart wide and the affections warm !

It is not enough to take our place with a company professedly separated, if there is not with it real separation of heart to Christ and real, unaffected love to each other. Not love talked about merely, but love expressed in practice ; love to Him that begeth shown in love to those begotten ; God's love perfected in us.

John gives us two marks of true love : one is obedience to God's Word, keeping His commandments ; the other by putting our lives at the disposal of our brethren (I John v. 3 ; III. 16). He then gives the subject a very practical turn and asks a searching question :

How dwelleth the love of God in one who has this world's good, and knows his brother is in need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion ?

Rest assured of this, if a fire of heavenly kindling is burning in a believer's heart, if divine love has taken possession of him, he will say, Here is an opportunity I must not miss ; I will make that poor brother's heart leap for joy ; I will make it burn with gratitude to God ; I will, by His grace, be the means of grateful thanksgiving going up to His ear ; I will use it as a witness that God has put His love in my heart. I will do this because my love for the ONE I cannot see is witnessed by my actions to my brother whom I can see.



## Reading.

JOHN XIII., XIV., XV.

J. S. O. proposed John XIII., XIV., and XV.

G. W. What is the main object of the Lord in these chapters? What is feet-washing?

J. A. T. Feet-washing is a symbol of His service, which fits us for the enjoyment of all that which comes out in the succeeding chapters.

J. S. O. "If I . . . have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet," shows we are under obligation to serve one another.

J. B. Feet-washing is removing the soil of this world from the soul. The effect of touching death robs the soul of having "part with Him."

W. B. What is meant by touching death?

J. S. O. Take Nain (Luke VII. 11-15) as an illustration. This world is a world of death; we get defiled by touching things in this world: it is a question of our feet, our walk. Feet-washing is a symbol of the Lord's present service of love in removing all that hinders communion during His absence from the world.

J. B. Moral death is a man away from God. The only one who needed not His feet washed was Christ—defilement would not

stick to Him—it does to us. People going through the desert could not help touching a dead bone; it is not a question of will or carelessness.

J. C. T. Why not say right out this has to do with sin and that includes defilement? Why limit it to defilement?

J. S. O. I do not think it goes as far as outward, overt acts of sin.

J. A. T. Feet-washing includes sin as well as defilement.

W. H. Does it partake of the ministry of priesthood and advocacy?

J. S. O. Not of priesthood, that is preventive rather than restorative.

C. W. Have we to seek the Lord for feet-washing?

J. C. T. The Lord seeks us first.

E. C. I believe it is here inauguration. The point is the identification of His disciples with Him in heaven, instituting a new system of blessing connected with His new place on high. We have part with Him there, and the Holy Spirit is given to conduct us to Him where He is.

W. T. P. W. Is it not more the thought of keeping us where the Lord has placed us?

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E. C. Yes.

J. B. You do not need feet-washing till you are inaugurated.

E. C. There is first introduction, then maintenance, and when necessary, restoration.

J. B. The *whole* man must be washed for inauguration; feet-washing is for maintenance and restoration.

J. A. T. The fact that the Lord uses *water* as a symbol of the Word should never be lost sight of. The Word is constantly applying the death of Christ to us so that, as J. B. S. used to say, there may not be a shade of distance between us and the Lord, where He is and in connection with the things of His presence.

J. B. It is that character of the Lord's suffering in death, illustrated by the ashes of the red heifer, which would be the form ministry takes in feet-washing.

W. H. W. Have you any suggestion as to the presence of Judas at the feet-washing?

J. B. No.

J. B. S. said it was exposure.

J. B. But that was in connection with the supper. Chapters xiv., xv., and xvi. develop what "part with Me" means.

J. B. They bring out the *effect* of having part with Him?

J. A. T. Chapters xiii. and xiv. go together for communion; xv. and xvi. lead out into fruit-bearing, discipleship, service and testimony.

I. F. The desire that we should have part with Him is not on our side, but on His; that makes it very precious.

J. A. T. Feet-washing takes its character, as everything in these chapters, in connection with His going to the *Father* (chap. xiii. 1). The Father is not brought in in connection with priesthood; that is with God.

J. B. The "Advocate with the Father" brings in, not locality, but our relationship to God.

J. A. T. Peter's faith never failed. The Lord's intercession prevailed.

J. A. T. Christ is the truth, as the revelation of all that God is, and thus of everything in its relation to Him; the Holy Spirit is the truth as the power of the application of it to our souls. Christ's life was made up of love to His Father and obedience to His commands. "I in you" (xiv. 20) would lead us to this, carrying with it the manifestation of Christ to us (verse 21). "Ye in Me" is Ephesians. But "in" in John has the thought of communion in life and nature. "Abide" is a word Paul never uses. "In Him" in Paul is more the new position of the Christian.

J. B. The Comforter, in chapter xiv. maintains the believer in what is true of Him down here; in chapter xv., testimony as to where He is; in chapter xvi.

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witnesses against the world and also reveals the Father's world.

J. A. T. The Father sends the Holy Spirit in chapter xiv., the Son in chapters xv. and xvi.—In connection with the testimony to a risen and glorified Christ.

W. T. P. W. The Holy Ghost dwells company-wise, also in individual believers.

J. A. T. "At that day" means the Holy Ghost's day—the present day. John xiv. 17. J. N. D. used to teach that "*dwelleth with you*" means company-wise, and "*shall be in you*" means the individual, only both referring to the time when the Spirit should be given.

J. B. Chapter xv. The Spirit is brought in at the end of the chapter in connection with the rejection of Christ.

J. S. O. Christ is the true Vine that set aside Israel (chapter xv.); though we cannot maintain the figure, as that of any existing relationship, yet the principle remains.

W. T. P. W. asked J. N. D. how long this figure lasted. He replied, "Twenty-four hours, but the principle remains."

J. A. T. Israel was set aside and the Lord took the place of the true Vine with His disciples. In verse 6 the word changes from "ye" to "a man," resuming the personal address in verse 7.

E. C. The union is outward and ostensible, not inward and spiritual. The principle of John xv.

abides, we are called to bring forth fruit; and abiding in Him is the absolute condition of it.

J. B. There is an analogy between this figure and holding the Head, only the latter is Paul's line.

J. C. T. To abide in Christ is a divine necessity; there is a difference between union and communion.

J. S. O. John xv. Hebrews vi. leaves the door open for the mere professor to fall away.

J. B. John xv. is not a question of going to heaven, but of fruit-bearing. Abiding and apostasy are the two contrasts.

J. B. Chapter xvi. When you come to the Father and the Son you get divine affections, with which we are led by the power of the Holy Spirit. This saves you from a persecuting spirit. You do battle for the truth, but you are not hard on persons.

Why did the risen Lord not fill all Jerusalem? Why did He confine Himself to the Upper Room? Because of sin; the Holy Spirit demonstrated sin—the sin of the world.

J. A. T. Referring to chapter xvi., there were two difficulties the disciples had: (1) What He meant by "a little while"; (2) "Because I go to the Father" (verse 7). First, "a little while." His leaving the scene by death seemed to dash all their hopes to the ground. But out of their sorrow and travail a Man was to be born into the world. It

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was the Lord taking His full place as Man risen from the dead, introducing them into a joy never to be taken from them—the Man of God's eternal purpose. It was the dawn of an everlasting day, out of the night of their sorrow. Their second difficulty was to know what He meant by going to the Father. The Lord meets that from the middle of verse 23. As the consequence of His going to the Father, we are left here as His representatives. And we have the privilege of coming before the Father in His name to receive all that is needed for such a position. I cannot admit of any exception. I have no business to do unless He has given it to me. I am to witness for Him, but further, I am to represent Him (see Col. iii. 17).

J. B. It simplifies things immensely if I believe that everything I do is to be for God's glory.

J. A. T. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full"—up to *that* measure.

W. T. P. W. What a wonderful thing that we can move the heart of the Father because we love His Son.

E. C. "I came from God," verse 27—the revelation of the thing revealed. "I came from the Father," verse 28—the revelation of the *relationship* of that which is revealed.

W. T. P. W. If the Lord took Lazarus out of death, Mary was quite sure *He* could not be held in death.

J. A. T. In verse 33 He meets them where they were if verse 30 shows how little they had entered into the instruction; "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace."

J. B. "I have overcome the world." That proves it ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> hostility; you have not to go very far before you meet it. His death was the witness that He had overcome the world.

E. C. We overcome the world in virtue of the divine nature we have.

*Low:soft.*

THE first creation *finished* with a man; the second *began* with a Man. The abode of the first was prepared *for* him *before* he took possession; the abode of the Second was prepared *by* Him *afterwards*. Both men are heads of a race; their progeny stands or falls with them. The first man *lost* his

abode and ruined his posterity; the Second Man *secured* His abode and blessed His posterity. The first man is of the earth earthy and returns to dust; the Second Man is the Lord out of heaven and abides for ever. All Christians derive from the Second Man.

## Our Calling

### Peace with God.

CHRIST endured the hiding of God's countenance, that we might bask in the light of that countenance; He was forsaken of God, that we might enjoy His presence for ever, bore the load of our sins in order to relieve us of the burden.

ON God's side all the disturbing elements were removed when He brought Christ again from the dead. On our side it is when we repose on what God has wrought. He first of all delivered Christ for our offences, then raised Him again for our justification. Faith accredits this and has peace with God.

### Peace of God.

UNRUFFLED serenity, undisturbed peace, marks our God. Omniscient, He foresees everything; omnipotent, He provides for everything. As circumstances arise they cause no disturbing thoughts, for He is *equal to, self-sufficient for*, all emergencies, passes on in the unruffled calm of His own being.

WE bring our cares and sorrows to Him, pour out our hearts, make known our requests, and the gracious sense of what God is, His love, His care, His power, takes the place of our impotence. We rise superior to our trials by being lifted—not *out* of them—but *into* the holy atmosphere of God's presence.

## The House of God.

(Substance of Address  
by JAMES BOYD).

I TIM. III. 14-16.

THESE things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

EPH. II. 22.

IN whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

I PETER II. 5; IV. 17.

YE also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

OF the supremacy of God in His own universe there can be no question in the mind of any one who has been brought out of his native darkness into the light of the revelation which has come to us in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He controls the elements of evil that are found there; yea, even uses them for the effectuation of the purposes of His love, and guides with a skilful and omnipotent hand into the various channels which

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lead to the one grand, glorious result, the eternal glory of His great, illustrious name and the supreme blessedness of all who submit themselves to His good and gracious decrees. If Satan has fallen, if spirits have rebelled against His authority, if man has been overthrown by the power of evil and lies with all his descendants under death, sin, and the power of the devil ; if His laws have been broken, His words despised, His servants murdered, His beloved Son persecuted, rejected, cast out, mocked, nailed to a gibbet, and if His Holy Spirit has been resisted, and if there has been no intervention on His part to stop or hinder such wicked doings, it was simply because these things prepared the way for the fulfilment of the grand designs which He had in view before the world was. We know that God is love. What rest and peace and joy this knowledge brings into the heart that has been casting about in vain for some foundation in this morass of iniquity, upon which to place the foot of faith knowing that it is unshakable.

We who are left in this evil world are under the training of the Holy Spirit of God, in view of the special place which, in His infinite love, has been given to us in eternal counsel. We are perfectly fit for glory when converted ; but God has been pleased to leave us for a time here during the absence of Christ. He does so for His own wise reasons, and one of these is that we might grow by the true knowledge of Himself (Col. 1. 10). All the exercises which He is pleased to pass us through are to this end. We are also here in testimony for Him and to maintain His truth in this dark world ; and by the troubles which He allows to come upon us He wakes us up again and again to the various truths which we may be in danger of slipping away from.

The last great truth which we had allowed ourselves to grow careless about was the fact that God had a dwelling-place upon earth—the house of God. In order that we might be better established in this most important truth, He has been pleased to bring us through deep waters. If we have learned our lesson, all will be well ; but if not we may find ourselves the subjects of discipline which may be still more solemn. He loves us too well to let us go to sleep at our post, while a wakeful and subtle foe, with murderous intent, creeps upon us through the darkness.

He has committed the honour of His blessed Son to the keeping of His people, and this He will at all costs safeguard.

I do not suppose any one thoroughly acquainted with the state of things existing amongst a section (the word will not be misunder-

stood by those to whom I speak) of the people of God, imagines for one moment that the helping hand stretched out by some of the saints of the Lord to others in affliction was the *cause* of our trouble.

Most of us know it was not. The question was one of the house of God and the relation it bore to the blessing of souls in the world : whether Christ was the subject of the gospel, in whom salvation, eternal life, and all other Christian blessings were placed for men ; or whether the believer was the depository of the living water, the channel through which the Holy Ghost was given to those coming out of the world through faith in the preached Word.

There were other questions connected with this, but this was the great point at issue. The teaching was against Christ, and most certainly not of God. I am told that this teaching has been to a large extent abandoned. I should rejoice with all my heart if it is so, but what a pity it was not abandoned before it was pushed to a division. But those who fought for the doctrine must take the responsibility both of it and the division. But by this means the blessed God who loves His people has been directing our attention to this most important subject.

The first thing I wish to direct your attention to is the fact that God has a dwelling-place upon earth. He has been here for nigh two thousand years, and He is just as truly here to-day as He was on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples were all filled with Him. We are not, perhaps, as fully aware of His presence as they were, but that does not alter the fact that, when He came, He came to abide for ever (John XIV. 16). And therefore is He here to-day. The world cannot receive Him. It neither sees Him nor knows Him, and we need to be careful lest we become as unaware of His presence as the world is. *He is here* and dwells in His house, and *we* are that house, " builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit " (Eph. II. 22) ; and when I say *we* I mean all Christians.

There are two thoughts connected with the house of God, or rather with His dwelling, which have been greatly mixed up, and that by those from whom one would have expected better ; that is, God's dwelling with us and our dwelling with Him. The former thought is set before us in His dwelling with us *here upon earth* ; the latter is set before us in John XIV. and is spoken of as the Father's house. As to the house of God, it is not so much a question of our dwelling with Him as it is of His dwelling with us ; and as to the Father's house, it is not His dwelling with us, but our dwelling with Him.

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When the temple shall be rebuilt both thoughts are combined ; but I am not dealing with that at present.

It used also to be said that there was a *journey* to be taken to the house of God, and the songs of degrees were quoted as setting forth that journey. But while that may be true of Israel and descriptive of the journey they shall take when they begin to come under the dealings of God as a nation, it has no reference to our journey to the house of God, for we have *no journey to take* ; we are in the house of God, and have our place there before we learn anything about the blessedness or responsibilities of the place. There is a journey to the Father's house, and we are now on that journey. In this connection Psalm LXXXIV. is most interesting.

The present house of God is the result of the ministry of Christ while He was here upon earth. He is spoken of as the Builder (Heb. iii. 3), and also as the One who is over it as Son. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit took up His abode in it. We are thus builded together for His habitation, and are gathered in the confession of one Lord, the acknowledgment of one faith, and submission to one baptism. In this building God has His dwelling-place : He dwells with us. By and by we shall dwell with Him, but that will be when we reach glory and the Father's house.

The house of God is not a new thought ; that is, it is not peculiar to the New Testament ; the *body* is ; but the body is Christ's, and the house is God's. The first intimation we have of  
HOUSE it is in the dream of Jacob (Gen. xxviii.). It is a spot  
OF GOD that is in direct communication with heaven. Jacob calls  
NOT A it the house of God and the gate of heaven. The *house*  
NEW is His dwelling-place, and the *gate* the place from which  
THOUGHT. His law goes forth. This will be true of the temple in  
the day when Christ shall establish His reign upon earth.  
But with the house blessing only is connected : " In thee and in  
thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." The house of  
God is here for the blessing of men. This is important to keep in  
mind. But the blessing was all in a person ! " *In thee.*" This is  
made good in Christ.

The next place to which I refer you is Exodus xxv. 8. There the Lord says, " Let them make Me a sanctuary ; that I may dwell among them." This was consequent upon their redemption out of the bondage of the Egyptians. It is only on the ground of redemption that God could take up His abode amongst men.

But what is the object of His dwelling amongst His people on earth ? Turn with me to 1 Chronicles xxviii. 2. There David



speaks of having had it in his heart to build "an house of *rest* for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the *footstool* of our God." Solomon speaks of it as a house "to burn *sacrifice* before Him" (2 Chron. ii. 6). One great object for which God took His place amongst Israel was that through them the whole earth should be brought into subjection to Him. The twelve tribes were in themselves professedly in subjection to Him. That they were not really so came out in their subsequent history. Nevertheless they had been brought out of Egypt redeemed by power; were professedly under His feet, that is, in complete subjection to His authority. He placed His throne amongst them so that through them the nations might also be brought under His sway, the whole earth subjugated.

They failed Him in this most miserably, therefore He cast down His sanctuary to the ground, profaned it, and left it desolate. Jeremiah laments that He "cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not His *footstool* in the day of His anger" (Lam. ii. 1). He will yet build it up again, and once more establish His throne in their midst; Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation, and the name of the Lord shall be excellent in all the earth. Then He shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; and bullocks shall be offered upon His altar (Ps. li. 19).

Another thing in connection with the temple built by Solomon is worthy of observation. When the cloud, the symbol of the divine presence, filled the house, so that on account of it the priests could not stand to minister, one might have thought that heaven would cease to be recognized as a place where Jehovah was to be sought and found; but Solomon beseeches God to hear from heaven, "*Thy dwelling-place*," when any prayed toward that house. This is very instructive, as otherwise we might conclude that, as God has a dwelling-place upon earth, He is to be found there, if I may so say, as One who has abandoned heaven. We learn the same truth to-day. The Holy Spirit was very manifestly amongst God's people in the early days of the church's history, yet Stephen in the hour of his martyrdom looked up steadfastly into heaven, finding all his resources there.

I will now call your attention to three passages which, I think, go together, as referring to one aspect of the house. In Matthew xvi. our Lord speaks of building His assembly upon the rock of the truth of His person as Son of the living God; to this Peter refers when

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he speaks of the spiritual house built of living stones ; and in Ephesians II. 21 we are told that the whole building fitly framed together *groweth* to a holy temple in the Lord. We are not told in any one of these scriptures that God dwells there. I do not say He does not, but I speak of the way in which things are brought before us in Scripture. In these passages the work is not looked at as complete : Christ is building, the living stones come, the building grows.

We are told that God dwells not in temples made with hands (Acts VII. 48). The term "*made with hands*" occurs several times in Scripture, and always refers to that which is material and carnal, in contrast to that which is spiritual.

Our glorified bodies are "not made with hands," in contrast to these carnal bodies ; the heavenly tabernacle (Heb. IX.) is "not made with hands," in contrast with the tabernacle set up by Moses. God dwells to-day in a spiritual building, in contrast to a material structure.

In Peter we are said to come to the Lord. When we heard the gospel we turned to the Lord. We came to Him for salvation. We did not know anything of Him as a living stone ; but in that character the Spirit of God speaks of Him through Peter, for He has before Him the instruction of the Jewish believers in the truth of the spiritual house. A stone, Peter says, "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious." He is the stone which the builders rejected, but which has become the head of the corner. On this stone believers, who are living stones, are built up a spiritual house. It is viewed here not so much as a dwelling-place as a place for offering sacrifices.

In the past dispensation there was a material house and there was a carnal priesthood ; but now we have a spiritual house and a spiritual priesthood. Solomon's temple was builded with stones hewn out of the quarry, and the priests were the sons of Aaron. But the stones which compose this building and the priests are one : the living stones are the priests. Every soul instinct with the life of Christ is part of this building, and is also a holy priest, capable of offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

But what are these sacrifices ? A Jew could bring anything from a turtledove to a bullock. A poor man brought what he could ; it might be only a turtledove ; whereas a rich man could bring a bullock. We have poor and rich to-day—I do not mean in earthly things, but in faith. It is not a question then of what the offerer under the law thought of the sacrifices, but what were they under the eye of God ? They all typified Christ. Whether the offering was

CHRIST IN  
ALL THE  
OFFER-  
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large or small, it was Christ that was represented by the victim which was laid upon the altar. When a man under law brought a bullock, he brought Christ. That was what God saw in the gift. It was the same when a man brought a dove : it was all Christ ; for Christ is the only offering that God can accept.

What is it we offer to God ? Hebrews XIII. answers : " By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing His name " (N.T.). You go to God with Christ, according to the measure in which you know Him. You may be weak in faith, and if so the measure of your presentation of Christ will be small. You may be rich in faith, and if so you will be able to set Christ before God in a large way. But inasmuch as the offering, whether large or small, is always Christ, both are equally well pleasing to God.

He has told us a great deal about Christ, indeed, He has nothing now to engage us with except Christ, and we go to Him and tell into His ear all that He has told into ours about the beloved Object of His heart, and that is acceptable to Him. But whether it be a bullock or a dove we offer we can only say, like David, who laid by so much wealth for the building of the temple, " Of Thine own have we given Thee."

Peter also speaks of the royal priesthood, and this thought also is connected with the house, for we are told that " in His temple doth every one speak of His glory " (Ps. xxix. 9). The ROYAL royal priests show forth the virtues of Him who called PRIESTS them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Such PRESENT present Christ to the world. I do not mean in the way of CHRIST preaching, for the house does not preach ; but in our TO MEN. manner of life we set before the world the excellencies of Christ. We are in the light of Christ risen, while the world remains in the darkness of unbelief, and while we are thus in the light we shine ; like the moon which shines down upon earth during the world's night, and it is enabled to shine because it is in the light of the sun. It is Christ we go with to God, and it is Christ we set before men. It is a great pleasure to God to have His people set Christ before Him, but the presentation of Christ to the world does not meet with the same acceptance from man. Nevertheless, we have nothing else to set before God or man except Christ.

*(To be continued).*

# Our Calling.

## A Called One.

(G. V. WIGRAM).

THE HEAVENLY CALLING will be better understood if we compare it with the earthly calling of Israel. The contrast serves to make what is involved in this truth clear.

They were a redeemed people journeying through a wilderness, their hearts cheered amidst the weariness, perils, and conflicts of the way by the rich inheritance; the glorious hope, the rest before them. We also are redeemed and travelling to our rest.

Theirs was an earthly hope, ours a heavenly; theirs were material blessings, ours are spiritual; they were called to walk with God through an actual wilderness, we are called to walk through a world of men and things turned into a wilderness by the attraction of heaven.

Can you say, "I am a called one"? What is the hope of such?

Nothing less than reaching the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Christ is sitting at the right hand of God in all His beauty and glory; our expectation is seeing Him as He is and being like Him.

The Father of glory, who looked at you in all your weakness and failure, is moulding you to the likeness of that One! These bodies of humiliation shall be like unto His glorious body.

What a thought, each believer being a vase full of glory; thousands of thousands filled with His glory! God will make you—will make me—one of them, each one reflecting the glory of Christ under the eye of God.

BE it that you have little qualification, less gift, and no office whatsoever; yet, as an individual member of Christ, child of God, and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, you must, as partaker of the blessing, and dwelt in by the Spirit, desire the honour of God and the glory of Christ.

While waiting for His Son, the Saviour from heaven, serve the

living and true God. The Spirit is at work to get Christ's members out of the world, and from under the power of the flesh and the devil. Labour therewith in God, and be the servant down here in every way, of the interest, honour, and glory of Christ in His members.

It is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.

(Continued).

## The House of God.

(JAMES BOYD).

THE Epistle to Timothy is written that we should know how one ought to behave oneself in the house of God. We have men, women, bishops, deacons, elders, widows, slaves, masters, rich, poor, and the conduct becoming each. The house is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. He is by His Spirit here to take complete charge of the household. He is here to be all to us that Christ was to His disciples when He was upon earth. It is He who leads us on in THE MINISTRY the knowledge of God, instructs us in the truth of Scripture, builds us up on our most holy faith, fills our hearts OF THE SPIRIT. with the love of God, fixes our attention upon Christ in heaven, enables us to call God our Father, witnesses with our spirit that we are God's children, gives us to know the deep things of God, is our power for testimony, service, prayer, and worship, and it is He who unites us to our living and glorified Head in heaven as His body. In short, as Christ is everything to us objectively, so is the Spirit everything to us subjectively.

He is here in the name of Christ and in His interests. Through Him the whole household is fed and nourished, and through Him the servants of Christ are enabled to go forth with the testimony of the gospel world-wide. He is the holy Oil which keeps the house illuminated with the light of God in the midst of the surrounding gloom. The secret of the light which radiates from the house lies in the fact that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"; and by the Spirit this verity is maintained in living power in the hearts of the saints, and the measure in which this is so is the measure of the light which radiates from the house.

The house is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is the witness to the truth of God in this world. That is what is indicated by the pillar, upon it the truth of God is inscribed; that is, WITNESS as far as that truth affects men and can be read by them. TO THE TRUTH There are the deep things of God, which no doubt wonderfully affect the radiancy of the light which shines out OF GOD. upon a benighted world, but these things are more for the minds and hearts of the household than they are for the enlightenment of others. It is more the light of God in the character of Saviour, a God of all grace, that is to be read on that

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pillar which has been so conspicuously set up in His goodness in the midst of this darkness.

It is also the base of the truth, that which maintains it on the earth. And for this purpose also the Spirit dwells in it. As to its *outward* appearance in the world to-day it is anything but a witness of the truth of God; but at the same time the truth is nowhere else. If it is to be found anywhere, it is to be found in that which ostensibly has the privileged place of the house of God. That every evil thing upon earth is also found there cannot be denied, and for this reason the judgment of God, when it is let loose against the world, must begin there (1 Peter iv. 17, 18); nevertheless the truth of God is there, and is maintained there, though the rubbish-heap of error may have almost completely obscured it from the gaze of men. There is that which Christ builds still in existence, for the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it (Matt. xvi. 18). The husk may be almost all that is visible, but the kernel is there, and will be there until the Lord comes and gathers His own to Himself, and then the husk shall be left desolate, a house without a tenant, to be overthrown by the judgment of God.

In mapping out the conduct that becomes those who dwell in the house of God, that which is most prominent in the mind of the Spirit is the first thing to which attention is drawn. He says, "I exhort therefore, that *first of all*, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Here we see what is uppermost in the mind of the Spirit. The character of God as a Saviour must be maintained, and the house is here in which dwells the One who alone can maintain God's that testimony. Authorities are to be prayed for, in CHAR- order that we may not be in conflict with the powers that ACTER be, but it is all in view of the testimony of God going AS A out into the world: for God would have all men to be SAVIOUR saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The MUST BE salvation of all has become possible, for the ransom of MAIN- the Mediator covers the whole human race: He gave TAINED. Himself a ransom for *all*. This testimony is by the power of the Spirit maintained in the practical life of those who compose the household. This is good and acceptable to Him, for it is what is of Himself wrought into the hearts of His people.

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This is the testimony of which Paul was not ashamed. It provoked the hostility of the Jews in a very special way, and the Gentiles also joined in persecution. Worldly saints, such as the OUTSIDE Asiatics (2 Tim. i.), turned away from the one who TESTI- heralded it abroad among the nations, and Timothy's MONY. heart sank as he contemplated its unpopularity and the afflictions that it had to endure. But Paul encourages his faithful but timid companion, and lets him know that this testimony of our Lord must ever be in affliction, but that to the very finish of the present dispensation the work of the evangelist must be done (2 Tim. iv. 5). The testimony to the truth of a Saviour-God and the ransom of the Mediator must never be abandoned ; but as the days grow darker, and the hearts of men harder on account of the growth of error, it is to be heralded abroad with ever-increasing vigour.

Within the house there is a testimony which does not go abroad, but which is more for the saints themselves, and that is prophetic.

INSIDE According to the peculiar nature of the attack of Satan, the prophetic word furnishes instruction, so that the TESTI- order of the battle for the faith may be according to MONY. God and that the victory may remain with His people.

With this the world has nothing to do. It is entirely *within*, and in the midst of the divided state of the house of God to-day belongs to no special company of people. But though this may, and does, help to keep the light which goes out to the world free from all obscurities, it is not that light itself, for the light which is maintained by the Spirit in the world is more evangelic than prophetic—it is the light of the Saviour-God. As Christ when here was the witness of the grace of God to men, so are His people here in His place. The Philippians are a bright example of this, and the testimony there is largely evangelic, though not altogether so.

The house does not preach, but it is as much interested in the preaching as is the preacher. It goes to God about the rulers of the world, and it goes to Him about the herald of the DOES gospel. We have a fine example of this in Acts iv. 23-31. NOT They tell God about the raging of the nations and their PREACH. rulers, ask Him to take account of their threatenings, and grant boldness to His servants to speak the word, and then the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. In Thessalonians also we read : “ Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with

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you : and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men."

What a place the house of God has ; and what a wonderful Personage dwells in it ; and it is He who dwells in it who makes it what it is as a light in the world. Of course, I speak of it according to what it was as originally set up and according to the peculiar privilege which belongs to it. It is the dwelling-place of God, a place where sacrifice is continually presented to Him, where the true character of God as Saviour may be read, where His truth is maintained, a support for the herald who goes forth with the gospel, and where the attention of God is, by those who are intimate with Him, referred to the rulers of earth, and His power supplicated on behalf of the going forth of that testimony which He has ordained for the salvation of men.

It is here, not to draw attention to itself, but to Christ. The object of the enemy has ever been to obscure its light, and he has been only too successful. It is not the *subject* of testimony, **DRAWS** *Christ is that*, and to *Him* it directs the thoughts of men. **ATTEN-** When it ceases to keep before the world the light of a **TION TO** Saviour-God it is useless here. It is a mere candlestick **CHRIST.** without a light, salt without savour, a well without water, a cloud without rain, a mirage of the desert to mock the weary traveller fainting for refreshment on the burning sand. And, indeed, as a witness for Christ it has become valueless and therefore it must be removed in judgment from this scene.

But seeing this is so, the opportunity for the overcomer has come. He is not bound to go with the crowd upon the highway of faithlessness to Christ. If no one else in Christendom behaved himself properly in the house of God, I as an individual may keep in mind the holiness that becomes such a sacred building, and as far as my personal influence goes I may seek to keep my fellow-believers also in mind that our privileges and responsibilities are just the same to-day as if everything was in the most perfect order. Besides, it is a great cause for thankfulness to be entrusted with the great thoughts of God and with the honour of the name of His Son in a day of departure from the truth and of indifference to Christ.

He is <sup>1</sup>assailed on every hand, and anything and everything is **CHRIST** substituted for Him, and we need to take care that we **ASSAILED.** are not carried away in the powerful current that seems as if it would sweep all before it. We must make everything of Christ in this day of departure from Him.



## The Pathway of Joy.

(T. OLIVER).

*"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full" (1 JOHN I. 3, 4).*

WHAT God proposes is that our joy should be full—not up in heaven, I do not need to say that, but down here upon earth, amidst all the ups and downs of our life. I have no doubt in my mind that there is only one road to this, and that is a royal road. We may seek to find other ways, but in everything that is divine there is only one right road; and I think the royal road down here to fulness of joy is that which is indicated in the verses I have read.

A "threefold cord," which cannot be broken, is the delight of the Father in the Son, the delight of the Son in the Father, and then the delight of both the Father and the Son in you and me and in all saints.

What a soul-stirring theme to dwell upon! Think for a moment of the delight of the Father in the Son. It knows no bounds. At this very moment He is looking upon the face of His Anointed, on the One who did His will perfectly, who, when He had received commandment to die, laid down His life in perfect obedience. He took it again in resurrection, and thus His power and His personal glory were fully declared.

What a Son! The Fulfiller of the counsels of the Father, the manifestation of all His ways, the One in whom every Godhead glory came to light, and who in His sacrificial death laid the imperishable foundation of divine righteousness, and made it possible for God to bless His saints according to His eternal counsels of holy love. Well may we sing:—

"Lord Jesus, we worship and bow at Thy feet,  
And give Thee the glory, the honour that's meet;  
While through Thee, O Saviour, our praises ascend  
And swell the loud chorus that never shall end."

We come now to the next point, the delight of the Son in the Father.

In John's Gospel He says<sup>r</sup> (chap. xiv. 31): "I love the Father"; and again in chap. iv. 32, 34: "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. . . . My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work."

In resurrection He positively sings—His joy could not be restrained. He had made God known to man; He declared the

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Father's name to His brethren ; He had glorified God both in life and in death, had put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, brought life and incorruptibility to light, undone the works of the devil, secured for His Father a great family of sons and a great company of worshippers, and won for Himself the love-gift of the Father—His beloved bride.

The other point I mentioned is the delight of the Father and the Son in you and me and in all His saints.

If you desire to know consciously in the power of the Holy Spirit of God the love of the Father and the Son, meditate upon the sacrifice that that love has made and the relationships in which God's grace has set you for ever in Christ Jesus.

Oh, beloved, what a marvel that we should have been created to have part in such relationships as Christianity discloses, and capable of such affections as are begotten in the soul in these relationships !

The Father and the Son are the objects of these affections, for God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, " Abba, Father." And our hearts have been attracted to and are attached to the Lord Jesus as Saviour, Head, and Bridegroom.

I believe the Ephesian saints were once in the power and enjoyment of these blessed truths, and yet they " left their first love," and have long since been set aside.

Our danger is the same, and hence the necessity of cultivating ceaselessly what is presented in the scripture I have read, namely, communion with the Father and the Son. Let us make it the great business of our lives. The Spirit of God has been sent down to make it possible ; the Scriptures are in our hands ; prayer is our great resource ; we have the throne of grace to sustain us as we go along.

Brethren, let us walk with God until travelling days are done and home is reached, seeking in all things to " please God," as Enoch did.

The breakdown on all hands is great. Men's hearts are failing them for fear ; infidelity abounds ; everything is hastening on to the great apostasy. Still, fear not ; God has not altered, the Son of God has not altered, the Spirit of God has not altered, the Holy Scriptures have not altered, and nothing need discourage us but forgetfulness of God.

Everything worth having is still within the reach of the upright. By the upright I mean those who give God His rights in every circle of responsibility and relationship. It is written : " Unto the UPRIGHT there ariseth light in the darkness " (Ps. CXII. 4) ; " No good will He withhold from them that walk UPRIGHTLY " (Ps. LXXXIV.

11) ; " The effectual fervent prayer of a RIGHTEOUS [upright] man availeth much " (James v. 16).

Real divine blessing and fulness of joy upon earth depends greatly upon our practical state, our faithfulness to and communion with our God.

May we exercise ourselves as to this in every detail of our lives, lest our hearts condemn us, and the Holy Spirit be grieved, our testimony marred, with the result we shall be of little or no use to God or man in our day and generation.

In closing, let me remind you how supremely happy the great Apostle Paul was in his pathway here. What was the secret of his happiness? Listen to his words: " This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus " (Phil. III. 13, 14).

May we each travel the same road, so that our joy may be full and, above all, God be glorified. Amen.

*Oh! the power and the joy of  
having nothing, being nothing, and  
knowing nothing but a living glori-  
fied Christ up there in heaven, and  
of being careful for nothing but the  
honour of His blessed name down  
here upon earth!*

*I know that the God-man  
who loves me is the centre of  
all God's thoughts and counsels;  
my heart rests where God's heart  
rests, all that is precious to God is  
mine, I repose in His measureless  
love.*

*His Cross behind,  
His home before,*

*Himself to-day  
And evermore.*

*TEARS are the outward flow, the  
expressive current, issuing from  
broken hearts.*

*Jesus wept! Wept as none  
other; for who could enter into the  
sorrows of this sad world as He?*

*Jeremiah wept! He would  
fain have made his eyes a fountain  
of tears for the daughters of his  
people.*

*Paul wept! Wept at the sor-  
rows and miseries of the church,  
as he foresaw the grievous wolves,  
not sparing the flock, the perverse*

*men from within corrupting those  
whom God had purchased with the  
blood of His own.*

*Who weeps for the church of  
God to-day? Who sighs and cries  
over the divided, distracted, scat-  
tered flock? Alas! that beautiful  
flock for which the Good Shepherd  
gave His life-blood is lame and  
bruised; the under-shepherds seek  
her not, each one intent on some  
smaller circle than the sheep of  
Jehovah's pasture, the church of  
the living God.*

## Wilderness Sorrows.

(F. W. GRANT).

IN the Psalms we see the ways of God in government producing exercise of heart, under a process of discipline wherein tribulation worketh patience, whilst divine sympathy is mingled with it all.

They are written for our learning; they tell us that when the will is broken, and the soul forced to wait in patience on God, we learn the God on whom we wait.

Patience works experience of unfailing goodness and tender mercy; and where patience has her perfect work we are entire, wanting nothing. We are still, we know that He is God; and it sufficeth us.

It is not only that His way approves itself to us, and that deliverance in due time is reached, but we learn more of God.

We are also comforted in knowing trial is not for ever. Deliverance from the trial and sustenance in it are both provided; and this surely manifests in whose hand the trial is.

The *end* of the Lord is *very pitiful* and of tender mercy; let us then fix our eye upon the end He has in view. His ways are ever good and holy, and He permits nothing to reach us for which He has not provided a way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

Would we learn the meaning of

His ways we must turn to God. His way is in the sanctuary; but we must be in the sanctuary to discern it. David reversed his judgment upon things when he approached God in His dwelling-place.

Another precious element in these wilderness sorrows is the comfort of knowing that our great High Priest has been through them all. In all their affliction He was afflicted.

The Man Christ Jesus, the Word become flesh, was here in all the tenderness and nearness of man to man, but was at the same time the glorious only begotten of the Father, who fully entered into the sorrows of those around, even when removing those sorrows by divine power. What blessedness lies in the contemplation of the perfection brought out in His path of trial, as well as the depth of the love which brought Him into it, in order to sympathize with us.

The godly remnant guided by the skilfulness of His hand shall celebrate His praise when their sorrows are over and past for ever. We also when in our desired haven shall praise and bless Him, not only for His saving grace, but His gracious ways with us, the sympathy of His heart and the succour of His hand.

## My Jewels.

(J. W. SMITH)

*"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall*

*"I am the Lord, I change not."* All things hang on that truth, God never changes. In this fact lay the hope for Israel, and in it lies the hope of the church to-day.

Well it is for us that our God knows no change. We change, dispensations change, but not so God.

The nation of Israel in the government of God had passed through many a change, but His purpose for them remains unaltered. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. XI. 29). These abide, God does not repent, and because the Lord changeth not the sons of Jacob were not consumed.

They had passed through many a furnace of trial, but there they were in the land and surrounding the temple; and in that land they shall be again according to "the gifts and calling of God," which know no final lapse or failure.

God may see fit, in His governmental ways, to repent, or to make a breach of promise (see Num. XIV. 34), but never in His gifts and calling—never in those purposes which connect themselves with grace. We may find an illustration of this in the case of the old and new covenants. The first was, as to blessing, conditional on the obedience of man and passed away. The second is dependent on the grace of God.

Blessing under the first was impossible, but under the second it is secured in Christ dead and risen. Hence we read of the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. XIII. 20). The blessings of that covenant are based and eternalized on the blood of the Son of God. Everything is divinely secured, and is, thank God, unchangeable.

What an unspeakable relief to the tortured mind it is to turn to God and His grace, where we find a salvation perfectly suited to such poor, guilty things as we are! What lessons of mercy and truth we read at the cross of Christ! There is the foundation and resting-place of the entire work of redemp-

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*not destroy the fruits of your ground ; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed : for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee ? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God : and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts ? And now we call the proud happy : yea, they that work wickedness are set up ; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often to one another : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine,*

tion, and there our anxious souls may rest without a tremor.

But turning to our passage, we would have gathered that after such a statement of God's care for the sons of Jacob they would be in a condition pleasing to Him. They had been brought, some forty thousand of them, from Babylon back to their own land, to enjoy its plenty and to worship the Lord as of old.

Were they in such a condition ? Alas, restoration to external privilege may not mean very much, the heart may remain unaffected, and so, when we turn to the first of the post-captivity prophets—Haggai—we find that, instead of devoting all their attention to the construction of the house of the Lord, they “ran every man to his own cieled house.”

They were constrained by selfish motives from the very start, with the result that God called for a drought upon the land, and upon all the labour of their hands. “Then the people did fear before the Lord”—mark the word, “fear before the Lord” ; and as a gracious consequence the Lord said, “I am with you,” and again, “My Spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not.” He produced a better condition. True, there was drought, but not consumption. God had regard to His gifts and calling. In wrath He remembered mercy.

Thus they were stimulated, God's abiding Spirit the pledge of encouragement, and “they did work in the house of the Lord.”

It was the work of “them that feared the Lord”—a work always beautiful, morally speaking, although they had to admit that, as compared with the first glory of the house, it was as “nothing.”

Perhaps so ! Who would compare Philadelphia with Pentecost ? Yet “the little strength” of Philadelphia was the work of the same Spirit. Exceedingly dear to the Lord are the “nothings” of this day.

The feeble efforts of those who “fear the Lord” are the victories of His grace in them, and accordingly : “From this day,” He says, “will I bless

*saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not"* (Mal. III. 6-18).

you" (Hag. II. 19). He changes not; He consumes not; He encourages. When we reach the realm of God's "I am" and God's "I wills," we are on clear and firm ground, and may reckon on the power of His arm and on the grace of His heart.

When we pass on to the next post-exile prophet, Zechariah—we find the brand plucked out of the fire, invested gorgeously, and charged to walk in the ways of the Lord, judge His house, and keep His courts—picture of mercy to Israel as a brand plucked from the fire instead of being deservedly consumed therein; and all this again "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord." The work of blessing is always His; and hence the shout of "Grace, grace," as the headstone is brought forth, the glorious climax of all His mercy. "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it."

Again we may say, in notes of wonder and praise, "I the Lord change not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed." But it was "a day of small things." Well, compared with the day of the Red Sea and Jordan, perhaps so. All such comparisons are instructive; but, after all, the restoration of Israel is as great a miracle of grace as was its salvation. It can only be described as "life from the dead."

The revival of Israel means all that for the world. When God's face shines upon Israel, His saving health (what words!) shall be known among all nations (see Ps. LXVII.). What blowing of trumpets in that new moon, that grand renaissance, that mighty revival!

In view of that restoration there shall be "a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness," and the spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured upon the house of David, and mark: "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him" (chap. XII.).

Oh, this is deep, tender work indeed, for it is the sight of a crucified Christ, that ever and alone breaks the proud heart to pieces and produces the humility that is dearer to God than the greatest or most dazzling gifts.

This is the Lord that does "not change." The Jehovah of Exodus is the Jehovah of Malachi. "That is My name for ever, and My memorial throughout all generations."

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But see His complaint against the very people to whom He had thus given this covenant name—“*Ye have robbed me.*” Solemn charge indeed. *They who would not steal from a neighbour may rob the living God.* How? “In tithes and offerings” is it possible to withhold from God His due? *Alas, much more than possible!* How glibly we sing: “*Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small!*” and the louder the tune the greater our—shall I say—hypocrisy, if the widow is neglected, the Levite left uncared for, and God’s claims ignored.

We are exhorted to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our intelligent service (Rom. XII. 1). “Service” here is not bondage, nor law, nor demand, but worship—the glad return of a grateful heart in the intelligence of redemption and in the power of the Spirit.

Were these restored captives in anything like the power of this? Far from it: the mass were leavened with pride, having a mere religious profession akin to our day, as depicted in 2 Timothy III. They denied the power of godliness while they cherished the form. History repeats itself.

Were there no exceptions?

There were, and there always will be, so long as God’s Spirit remaineth, so long as His people are here.

What marked them? “The fear of the Lord”—that marked them and that marks all who truly walk with God to-day.

There is no grace more wholesome than a genuine, filial fear of the Lord. Let us diligently cultivate that grace. “They that feared the Lord spake often [how often?] one to another” (chap. III. 16). They were attractive to and attracted by one another. Each possessed a something which had a magnetic instead of a repulsive effect. They found a charm in each other’s company, an irresistible kinship which bound them together. “They feared the Lord and thought upon His name.”

That was the secret. His name was their magnet, their lodestone, and that they might meditate on that name together explained the reason for their frequent intercourse. It became their centre, their bond of union, the secret of their very life, their all.

If in Haggai the house was as “nothing,” if in Zechariah the day seemed “small,” so in Malachi a feeble few only “feared the Lord and thought upon His name.” They had nothing outwardly to boast of, yet of them it is written: “They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up *My jewels.*”



## Stewardship.

(DR. MACKERN).

In the Spirit breathe and live,  
By the Spirit yield and give,  
All you have, and are, to God.

THE household of faith needeth much waiting on; the Head of the house hath provided for this, and hath given gifts for it. In the providence of God it is given to some to hold the bag; to be used in the assembly, to the glory of Him who is the Head of the house.

Money—like manna—if unused, is kept for the owner's hurt; it breeds maggots and moral mischief. An unused sword rusts, an unworn garment attracts moths. Rust and dust are the devil's usuiy of money kept to the owner's hurt.

Who holds the bag for the Lord to-day? How are they using its contents?

Are they spent in full communion with His mind, is it opened at His desire? He loves to visit the poor, and espies with quick eye the empty cupboard. He feels for the helpless sick, waits with watchful care on the aged, notes the sorrows of the grey-haired, thinks of the vacant heart of the widow, cares for the desolate orphan, seeks to act toward them as Husband and Father. His hand moves toward the bag—who opens it for Him?

The same bounteous hand which bid disciples bring the loaves and fishes, setting His guests on the fresh carpet He had spread of green grass, and making much out of little, fed the hungry crowds; the same heart and hand would call to each of His own to-day to bring forth that which they have; and all so moved will find His hand retaineth still the quality of making of little abundant blessing, if He be obeyed in the Spirit.

To do good and communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

When our Lord was on earth women ministered to Him of their substance, they were foremost in this ministry of love. The body of Christ is here, those who will may still make Him a Bethany—tears for feet, oil for head, hair for towel.

What a history is that of the first bearer of the bag! What a warning against lusting after that which it holds. How it illustrates that word "the love of money is the root of all evil," and shows how, outwardly and professedly, one may be near to the Lord and yet be a *thief*!

"It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

"Will a man rob God?"

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## Caleb and Anna.

(DR. WOLSTON).

*"Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five*

THE histories of Caleb and Anna are not only very interesting portions of the Word, but they should stimulate us all and encourage young saints, for these aged pilgrims show the young how to carry themselves.

In Anna we get an exquisite example of earnest devotedness under difficult circumstances. We are told she was a widow of fourscore years. Caleb was fourscore and five, but his zeal and energy were unabated. Some people think that as we get older we must get colder; but not so Caleb. He seemed to get warmer. What was the secret? He "wholly followed the Lord."

It was a remarkable thing for him to say of himself: "I wholly followed the Lord my God" (Josh. xiv. 8). But it was true. He had good ground for saying it. He said it because he had already heard the Lord say it about him. "My servant Caleb . . . hath followed Me fully" (Num. xiv. 24). Moses also twice said it of him, and Joshua said it too (Deut. i. 36; Josh. xiv. 9, 14). You are a good specimen of a saint if the Lord Himself and two of your brothers can say you are *following wholly* after the Lord.

For the secret of it, in Caleb's case, let us look back to Numbers xi. The professing company of Israel said the manna was "nothing" (ver. 6). They had got tired of Christ. The danger lies there, dear young brothers and sisters. Danger lies in wanting something more, or less, than Christ. We shall not wisely and well go through this scene unless we feed on Jesus in lowly grace and dependence on God, and make the loving study of His life on earth the food of our souls. This will give us character. We are all impressed by the thing we are occupied with. We must feed on Christ, the lowly, humble, gracious *One*, in all the vicissitudes of His life on earth.

No man had so little of the visible favour of God as to His circumstances down here, yet none was

*years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness : and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me : as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day ; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced : if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel" (Josh. XIV. 6-14).*

so restful, so peaceful as He. Let us feed first, then walk in His footsteps.

We read in Numbers XIII. of the spying of the pleasant land. This was the beginning of much sorrow, for though Israel thereby got the knowledge how to go into it, they, alas, despised it. The twelve spies sent out were really sent in unbelief, and ten of them brought back an evil and false report.

Caleb was one of the men chosen for this service ; but he is a marked contrast to the others, for he advocates " wholly " going on into the land. Can we do better than follow his example ?

God loves to cheer His people and expects them to go right. Scripture is written far more for direction than for correction. Here the people had a double testimony, one false, the other true. It was Caleb and Joshua that gave the true report of that goodly land which prefigures the heavenlies in which our blessings are. If we have entered into heaven experimentally we shall always be able to give a good report of the land, and that will impress others.

There is something about Caleb that impresses you. His spirit was so good. The Lord talks about Caleb's spirit. A man's spirit is more important than his communications. *Caleb's was the spirit of a man set on answering to the call of God.* " Let us go up at once, and possess it " was his verdict (Num. XIII. 30). Only two men out of the twelve gave a right report.

How far have you and I travelled into heavenly things, so as to be able to tell people about them and impress them with heaven's joys ?

In chapter XIV. Caleb's testimony is splendid. " It is an exceeding good land " (Num. XIV. 7). Deeply impressed, he repeats the good report of the land. " If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey " (ver. 8). Let the breakdown be what it may, Caleb is for going on and for going in.

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In our day what have we to do, fellow-Christian? We have the honour open to us of being Calebs and Joshuas, and of bringing to God's people a good report of the land. Grapes of Eshcol will attract hungry and thirsty souls; minister Christ and you will thus attract them; He is the centre of heaven's joys.

What filled Caleb's heart with confidence was that he kept in the Lord's presence and in His love. He believed in God's purpose to bless His people, hence the spirit of Caleb is so beautiful. He had heard God's word: "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord," viz. I shall carry out My purposes, and in spite of the sin and failure of My people, the earth shall be filled with My glory (Num. xiv. 21). Then what a cheer must Caleb have received when he heard the Lord say, "My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it" (ver. 24).

All this came true. How carefully the Spirit of God marks the history of Caleb and Joshua. They were true and loyal to their calling. What a blessed thing to be marked by these characteristics. And see the result in Caleb's case. In Numbers xxxiv. the Lord names only those who, when they have got in, shall divide the land amongst their brethren. These are God's words: "These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you. . . . And ye shall take one prince of every tribe, to divide the land by inheritance. . . . Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh" (vers. 17-19). God recollects his devotedness and makes him a prince. He shall have also the honour and reward of dividing the land.

Note also Moses' words regarding him: "Caleb the son of Jephunneh shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he hath trodden upon, and to his children, because he hath *wholly followed* the Lord" (Deut. i. 36). When the spies went up, in chapter xiii. of Numbers, they reached a certain spot called Hebron. There Abraham first worshipped (Gen. xiii. 18) and there David was crowned (2 Sam. v. 3). That sacred spot Joshua gave to Caleb "because he *wholly followed* the Lord God of Israel" (Joshua xiv. 13, 14). What a blessed result of following wholly.

Was it conceit on Caleb's part to say: "I *wholly followed* the Lord"? Not at all. His heart was right. God help you and me to as honestly say, "I surrender everything to Thee, blessed Lord." "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour" (John xii. 26), is the Lord's word.

"I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me" is a fine testimony from a man eighty-five years old. We too must stand for the truth. "Give me this mountain" was the claim of faith. The children of Anak were there, viz. tremendous difficulties existed, but faith regarded them not. "I want that place, give me Hebron," says Caleb. He deserved it and he got it. He had put his foot there already and it became his. So with us. Do we desire more of Christ? You will have as much of Christ as you set yourself for. He will control you, fill you, delight you. Difficulties are then nothing.

Fully blessed himself, Caleb can now think of others. To his daughter he says, "What wouldest thou?" And then gave her "the upper springs, and the nether springs" (Joshua xv. 19). We too are called to inherit a blessing and to be able to bless others (1 Peter III. 9). The end of Caleb's history reminds us of the Lord's words: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John VII. 37, 38).

*"There was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. . . . She gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke II. 36-38).*

Drawing from Him constantly, we can be Calebs in a day of apostasy.

Now one word as to our sister Anna in connection with Deuteronomy XXXIII. 24, 25. "And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Anna was of the tribe of Asher. She was acceptable to her brethren, they listened to her gladly. Day and night she was before the Lord, serving Him with fastings and prayers, though so old.

When she learnt Christ had come, "she spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." How did she know them? She was a true Asherite, and dipped her foot in oil; she walked in the Spirit; and constantly and steadily going on with the Lord, she found them all out, and then spake of Him in every corner of Jerusalem. God help each one of us to dip our foot in oil, then shall we understand fully the word, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Oh, may God make us all Asherites and Calebs.

## Our Calling

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## Serving and Served.

(J. B. STONEY).

TRUE service brings the soul to God. If I am in the enjoyment of God myself, I want to bring souls into the same enjoyment; if the Scriptures are unfolded to me, I want to bring others into the same understanding of them.

The Levites and the Priests were connected with the sanctuary in order that they might bring the people into the nearness to God in which they were themselves.

We come from Christ as appointed and gifted to draw souls near to Him.

The Levites, dwelling in cities scattered all over the country, made the service of God their supreme object, the Lord being their inheritance.

They served and were served. They ministered in spiritual things and reaped carnal things. They had no inheritance, but had a claim on all the inheritance. When the possessors of the land were in a good state the Levites were well looked after. As the people declined spiritually, they failed in privilege and responsibility, and the Levites were neglected in proportion.

It is ever a mark of spiritual decline when saints lose interest in the Lord's servants; a sure sign that Christ's things are not paramount when their temporal needs are neglected. It betrays a want of holy exercise.

Service is reciprocal. It is the genius of Christianity that each one has an assigned ministry; those served are to serve, they are to bear each other's burdens; those taught in spiritual things are to communicate to the teacher in temporal things. Such ministry Philip-  
pians iv. tells us is very acceptable to God—an odour of a sweet smell.

Do you come to a reading, or lecture, to be acted upon; or do you come expecting something you are to act upon? No one is ever really disappointed who comes in the spirit of "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Out of the stones the Lord can make bread, and He can turn a very little thing into immense blessing.

If we were more exercised about our being found together, if we meditated and prayed at home over the scripture under consideration at the reading meeting, there would be far more profit to our souls when together.

The secret of collective blessing is individual exercise and prayer. There is a preparedness of heart needed to receive, as well as a preparedness flowing from communion with the Lord in those who seek to minister. The saint and the servant reciprocally affect each other.

## Over Jordan.

(J. S. OLIPHANT).

COL. III. 8-13; III. 1-3; JOSH. V. 9-15.

I DESIRE to add a few words to what we had yesterday about Caleb, his faith and his reward.

What has taken place of late shows the danger of acquaintance with divine things in a superficial way. A time of testing comes; Christ is not the sole object, a single eye is lacking, consequently there is neither faith nor courage to stand for the truth.

We must be tested all along the way; and need to ask ourselves whether we are walking in the truth of what we profess to hold. Are our souls practically *in it*, so as to know and enjoy it experimentally?

There were some things Caleb knew when he and Joshua stood as witnesses to the power of God to bring the people in; his confidence was in God in the midst of the unbelieving people. He knew he was in the wilderness bodily, whilst his desire was fixed on Canaan. He knew he had turned his back on Egypt *for ever*. He had not forgotten the passage of the Red Sea, nor the triumphant song which celebrated the power of Jehovah when they saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. He knew that God was with His people in the desert, but his heart was in the pleasant land flowing with milk and honey, of

which he had tasted the fruit. Though his feet were still in the desert, his confidence was in God, and in His delight in His people, and in His power to bring them into the land and drive out the enemy before them.

But he had yet to cross Jordan with Joshua. He had to plant his feet the other side, to partake of that memorable passover in the plains of Jordan, after the circumcision at Gilgal, which rolled away the reproach of Egypt. He had to be with Joshua in the wars in Canaan, to witness the power of Jehovah in the collapse of the walls of Jericho, and to learn the lesson at Ai that God's power could not be with His people if they were identified with an accursed thing.

All this Caleb had to pass through before the supreme moment arrived, when he reminded Joshua of what "Jehovah said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-Barnea," and claimed his inheritance in the land of promise.

This has a voice for us. In the wilderness God was for the people. In the land the people were for God.

We can most of us testify to the care of God amidst the pressure of circumstances; we have tasted

the sympathy and answer of our great High Priest. Every contrary wind that blows would have swept our feet off the path of faith, if we had not been sustained by divine power.

Like Caleb we may confide in God to bring the many sons to glory, and be running with patience our wilderness journey, the race set before us looking unto Jesus; but the truth connected with being "over Jordan" carries us into another region altogether. That is why I read Colossians. Christ is risen, and *dead and risen with Him* is the place we are entitled to take by faith; but this involves what Jordan sets forth, not only faith, but experimental association with Christ in death, so that we can truly say, "I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God." We have put off "the body of the flesh" by the circumcision of Christ (*i.e.* His death). We are complete in Him who is our life, and He is the head of His body the assembly.

Now herein lies the *power* of the new place. I may know and accept the doctrine of being risen with Christ, but if the enemy can bring in anything between the members and the Head, how can the nourishment flow, or the power of life in the Spirit be known? Judaizing teaching was characterized by "not holding the Head." If we turn to our own heads, we are not owning

that we are dead and our heads gone, nor is it "holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." We must not confound exercise of conscience with introspection; deliverance must be known before there is *any* power or liberty; and if any one is looking within to find good in his flesh, or power in himself to fulfil right desires, he has yet to learn that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

"In the flesh" is descriptive of the state of a person who has not received the Spirit of God, and is under law in principle, and so a slave to the law of sin and death which is in his members.

There can be no fruit for God under law; but the Christian is "dead to the law by the body of Christ, to be to another who has been raised from among the dead in order that we might bear fruit to God." He is "not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwells in him," and objectively he is in Christ before God. He has accepted the truth that God has condemned sin in the flesh and that he died with Christ, being set free from the law of sin and death by the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus. "When we were in the flesh" is a description of the past condition in which he no



longer is found. The flesh *in him* is to be practically mortified in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In Colossians we are on resurrection ground, though still on the earth, and not viewed as seated in the heavenlies, as in the Epistle to the Ephesians. But faith is entitled to take the place on the other side of Jordan. Putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, being dead with Him, supposes that we occupy the ground, not merely doctrinally, but *experimentally* in the practical recognition of the truth that we are dead, and that our life is hid with Christ in God.

God brought the people out of Egypt and through the sea by His power; but experience in the wilderness flowed from being there. So God has brought us to Himself by redemption in the world, where tribulation is found and experience.

Further, "for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, He has quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ." This is not a question of experience, but of the power of God towards us; but we cannot be in conflict, on the other side of Jordan, until we have taken our place by faith, and know we are dead with Christ in the history of our souls *experimentally*.

The Colossians were in danger

from philosophy and vain deceit and the elements of the world, so the Apostle unfolds to their souls the glories of the Head in heaven, and presses upon them their identification with Christ in life and death, that, in the practical realization of these truths, they might hold the Head from which the members derive the nourishment needed, so that the body increases with the increase of God.

If we have appropriated the truth set forth in Colossians II. and III., and are setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at God's right hand, we can then take up and put on the whole armour of God, by which we shall be able to stand in an evil day. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

Holiness is essential in conflict for the truth if we are not to be overcome by the foe. Joshua had to hear: "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned." The lack of power to-day can only be accounted for by an unjudged state. Let us judge ourselves and walk in separation from evil, content to seek a pathway which will please our Lord and Master. "Well done, good and faithful servant," are words which will be heard, and dearly prized, in the day that is coming.

## Christ's Supreme Interest.

(EDWARD CROSS).

MATT. XIII. 45, 46 ; EPH. I. 15, etc.

*"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls : who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Matt. XIII. 45, 46).*

SOME one once said to J. N. D. that they were much troubled by a brother who at their prayer meetings prayed for everybody as though he thought the world would be converted ; whereas at such a prayer meeting the proper subject for prayer was the church and the interests of Christ in it. J. N. D. replied that the one was prayer according to the nature of God, the other was prayer according to His counsels—they were different, but not contradictory—they should be distinguished the one from the other, but not divorced. It is written that "God so loved the world"—that is a general, universal love ; and again that "Christ loved the church," etc.—that is a special love. Room must be made in the mind for both, as they are both in Scripture.

*"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25-27).*

We are apt to get contracted, and while holding the one to refuse the other. We should hold both. Yet the gifts of the evangelist and of the teacher are different the one from the other ; but they are helpers each of the other and they both tend to the same end (Eph. iv. 8-16). The gospel cannot ignore the church ; the church cannot despise the gospel. Through it she was formed herself by the "deliverance" it proclaims (Gal. i. 4), and as J. N. D. has very well said, "when the church ceases to be a delivering body, she ceases to enjoy the sense of her own deliverance."

But the work of the evangelist is in its nature so different from the work of the teacher, that from the frailty that attaches to us, the one is sometimes inclined to interfere with the other's work. No one should interfere with another in the way he sees best to serve the Lord ; and no one should allow himself to be interfered with by another. To help one another by brotherly counsel in the spirit of love and humility, in the furtherance of a common cause, is good, and when graciously proffered would be generally accepted.

Interference is always resented. It springs from an evil, high-minded spirit ; and only evil comes of it.

The scriptures at the side of this paper show the present interest of Christ—the object that is specially before His mind.

In Matthew XIII. the kingdom offered to and rejected by the Jew, in the preceding chapters, passes into “mystery.” But the refusal of the “King” by the people does not annul the “kingdom,” nor prevent the King from pursuing His interests meanwhile, till the kingdom will be established in the powers of a coming day (Matt. XXII. 44).

The kingdom now takes another form, and it is likened, among other similitudes, to a merchantman who, finding “one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had, and bought it.” What can that pearl be other than “the church”? “Christ loved the church, and gave Himself” (all that He had) “for it” (Eph. v. 25).

*This is the present object of Christ, through all these waiting years ;* while the kingdom, of which we have a picture in Matthew XVII. 1-8, is still in abeyance. This kingdom belongs to Him by right, and He will yet reign to the ends of the earth. “Ask of Me,” Jehovah says, “and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Ps. II. 8). The world is His, and shall be His, “far as the eagle’s pinion and bird’s wild wing can soar.” But other interests engage Him at the present time. “I pray not for the world,” He says, “but for them which Thou hast given Me ; for they are Thine” (John XVII. 9).

The world is not now His object, but those whom He has redeemed out of it. These are they who in the present period form the church. It in no wise interferes with the continuance, in altered circumstances, what are called the “mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,” of the ways of God in the all-various resources of His wisdom, fitted to countervail all the opposition of the enemy ; but it is in itself an object so unique in the operations of His will, and so distinct from the revelation of it hitherto made, that He has seen fit to raise up and qualify the Apostle Paul, as a special servant, to make it known, and as “a wise master builder” to set it up.

Hence all his activities, whether in the gospel or otherwise (*cf.* Col. I.), tended in this direction (Eph. III.). He was the Apostle of the Gentiles, yet in a special way the object of his ministry, his great desire, was to preach the “unsearchable riches of Christ” in His glory in the church. For this he strove ; for this he prayed. He would preach the gospel in the wide world, but it was to “save some” out of it (I Cor. IX. 22), and to bring them to the full know-

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ledge and understanding, in the affection and delight of their hearts, of the transcending riches of the love of Christ, and of the grace that would associate them with Him in glory (Eph. II., III.).

This was the subject-matter of his prayers for them (Eph. I., III.); this the consuming desire of his soul; as it was in kindred circumstances the absorbing and commanding purpose of Eleazar to find out and bring home with him a "bride" for his master's son (Gen. XXIII.).

This it is that gives its chief characteristic to Christianity as set forth by the Apostle Paul.

We may be prepared accordingly to find that it is of all other truths the one truth that is opposed by the professing church.

If God is set on a certain object, the testimony He renders to it becomes, *ipso facto*, the special object of the enemy's attack. And so with the church. Place beside the words "Church of God" any of the expressions "Church of Rome," "Greek Church," "Anglican Church," "Dissenting Churches," and other petty "sects" of all and every kind, and the opposition to the truth and the utter confusion of the whole vista is patent to the eye.

Moreover, the situation is hopeless. Not all the power and wit of man could bring together the broken fragments of the vase, nor elevate them to the pristine and predestinated beauty, according to God, of the church in Christ Jesus, the vessel of the glory of God through eternal ages (Eph. III. 21).

What then? Give all up in despair?

Regard the picture as a beautiful thing that might have been, that is not, nor is possible? and abandon oneself *in res mediocres*, to the satisfaction of doing the best you can in impossible circumstances?

No, such is not the teaching of Scripture; such is not worthy of God; nor is it the path of faith. "Continue," says the Apostle, in reviewing a state of things of which a worse picture could not be drawn, "continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Whether he got others to be of the same mind with himself or not, he, as "a man of God," is "to continue" in what he has learned, for the failure of man does not alter the truth of God.

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ALL our affairs in this world should be ordered with our eyes resting on the return of our Lord Jesus; remembering man's world is soon to end, Christ's day to begin.

AMIDST all that is discordant and disordered around, our souls are to be preserved in the sense of our heavenly citizenship and exercised in relation to a heavenly life.

## Notes of Reading on John XVII.

J. C. T. "These words spake Jesus." Do they refer to what He had previously spoken, or those He was about to utter?

J. A. T. Surely to what went before.

W. H. Was the Lord's Prayer uttered audibly?

W. T. P. W. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said."

J. A. T. In chapter XVI. 12 He had told them, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." His love had been wonderfully expressed in the previous chapters, but there were depths beyond what they could enter into; so here, lifting up His eyes to heaven, He poured out what was deepest in His heart about them into His Father's ear. The astonishing thing is that the disciples were allowed to draw near and listen to these wonderful communications.

J. W. S. "The hour is come." When was that?

J. A. T. The hour of the cross, as constantly referred to by the Lord. It had cast its dark shadow upon all His path of life. It was the hour which shall stand alone in the annals of eternity, for all that took place in it. But He takes His place as having gone through it (see ver. 5), and claims the glory on the other side of it by His divine title as the Son.

J. S. O. "Now is the Son of man glorified" (XIII. 31). Does that refer to the same time?

J. A. T. It was the same hour of the cross. His perfection is seen in counting it the hour of His glory, because God was glorified in Him there.

I. F. The cross becomes the central pivot upon which all the glory of God turns.

J. G. Is there any difference between the glory in verse 1 and in verse 5?

J. A. T. May it not be safer for us to observe the difference of the ground upon which He claims it, than to attempt to institute a comparison where all is so beyond our thought? In verse 1 it is "glorify thy Son." In verse 5 He claims to take His place in the "glory which I had with thee before the world was," on the ground of His finished work. That work was accomplished for our sins, and thus brings us in. It was His own essential glory. But He claims to take His place in it as man.

E. C. It puts man into an entirely new place.

W. H. Is there not a glory in this chapter incommunicable? To whom could He communicate the glory which had been with the Father before the world was?

A. C. Is there a difference between being glorified in Him and glorified by Him? Scripture speaks of His being glorified in God (XIII. 32), and of our being glorified in Him (2 Thess. i. 12); but I am not aware of a passage where it says "Glorified by Him."

W. T. P. W. What is meant by God being "glorified in Him"? Is it anything visible?

J. A. T. Is it not rather that all that God is in His own nature has been set forth?

W. T. P. W. Was God's glory displayed by the taking of Lazarus out of the grave?

J. A. T. It was "for the glory of God"; but John XIII. 31 goes a good bit beyond that.

J. S. O. "The manifestation of excellency" is a definition of glory that some one has given.

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H. H. H. But coming back to our chapter, "that thy Son also may glorify thee," is it the thought that God is glorified by the Son giving effect to the counsels of God?

J. A. T. Ever governed by the Father's glory in all His path on earth, it is still the same in the glory. He glorifies the Father by giving eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him. We know that power over all flesh took in more than this (v. 22); but there is no reference to judgment here; it is His strange work.

I. F. Is it as the last Adam that Christ gives eternal life?

J. A. T. "The last Adam is a quickening spirit." But eternal life goes farther—as so intimately connected with the knowledge of the Father and the Son.

J. G. Is this character of eternal life peculiar to this dispensation?

J. A. T. Surely it will not be so characterized in the times of Israel's earthly blessing.

In 1 Corinthians xv. 45 He who ever gave life as a quickening spirit now takes the place of the last Adam in doing so, becoming head of a new race.

W. T. P. W. "The Son quickeneth whom he will." This was no new thing. But to quicken as the last Adam involves a new race.

C. W. Can we get any help as to the division of the chapter?

J. A. T. The first five verses speak of the work of Christ with all its consequences for Him, which forms the basis of the whole subsequent position. Then from 6-13 He puts us into His place before the Father; then, 14-21, He puts us into His place as to the world; then (22-26), He carries us on to the yet future, in which eternal life will be enjoyed in its own sphere. So we get in this chapter the full range

of eternal life. It is a present life of heavenly relationship with the Father, of absolute separation from the world, and goes on to the glory in which we shall be manifested with Christ, and to the most intimate circle of relationship in the Father's house.

E. E. C. Mr. C. spoke of man being displaced.

E. C. We have in Christ a contrast to the first man. He could not represent God, save with great limitation. Christ as a man expresses God fully, hence in Proverbs we have the wonderful place man has before God. Christ brings with Him below the power to express what He is above. He fully expresses in every way eternal life as a man. Life was in Him before man was created. "In him was life," and that life becomes the life of men. When God is speaking to us He conveys divine thoughts in human words; but He is fully manifested in Christ in manhood. Creation does not manifest God. It expresses the Creator. God is expressed in the Son.

W. B. Eternal life eludes all definite description.

E. C. So does all life—even human life cannot be defined. John xvii. 3 is not a definition of eternal life.

J. A. T. The knowledge of the Father and the Son are very precious elements in it.

E. C. John xvii. 3 looks like a vehicle to an end: "that [or in order that] they might know thee."

J. A. T. Although, in John's writings, "In order to" is often equivalent to the simple infinitive "to."

W. T. P. W. Has the believer eternal life now?

E. C. Yes: in Christ.

I said to J. N. D., "Have I got eternal life?" "Yes," he said, "if you have got Christ." "But I have

it, in me." "Yes," he replied, "if you have Christ in you."

H. H. H. The world persecutes because they know not the Father and the Son.

I. F. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (ver. 6). He sets us as sons before the Father's face. Is that eternal life?

J. A. T. The whole position of Christ and that in which He sets us in this chapter brings out eternal life. But I should like to distinguish: we do not get sonship in John. It is always the more intimate relationship of children, until in Revelation XXI., in the eternal state: "I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

E. C. Eternal life belongs to another scene; all in this lower life is short of this.

W. B. It is refreshing to turn to the simplicity, yet profundity, of Holy Scripture, which says, "He that hath the Son hath life."

F. B. H. Is there any difference between "thy word" and "thy words"?

J. A. T. "Thy word" (ver. 6) belongs to the revelation of the Father in the Son. "Thy words" (ver. 8) are given to us as the means by which our relationship may be enjoyed. He was sustained in the enjoyment of His relationship with the Father by them when He was here. Now He has put us into that relationship, and passes them on to us to maintain us in the joy of it. "Thy word" (ver. 14) belongs to our path in the world: "They are not of the world, even as I am not." Then (vers. 17 and 19) He refers to a double means to produce practical separation from it: "Thy truth, thy word is truth." As in verse 6, it is the revelation of the Father. To know my place before the Father

and in the Father's love is the first element of sanctification. But there is another: the place of Christ. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." For our sakes He has set Himself apart in the glory, that we may be set apart by the revelation of all that He is there to our souls—Himself the source, measure, character, and power of our practical separation from the world into which He has sent us for the purposes of His glory.

W. H. In verses 17 and 19 is the word sanctification positional or practical?

J. A. T. It is practical as bearing upon us in both places.

I. F. How is it that we are so little in the truth of all this?

Well, John XVII. will hardly reveal that. From first to last His love presents us before the Father according to His own delight in us, and not according to our failing realization of all the wonderful place He sets us in.

J. W. S. Tell us more about responsibility not being raised in chapter XVII.

J. A. T. Is it not the most powerful incentive to our hearts (if we have hearts to be reached by anything), seeking to answer to His, that the truth should be so presented to us? He says, "They are not of the world." He does not say we ought not to be of the world. "They are not," twice repeated. Could anything be likely to act more powerfully on us to produce separation? He has set Himself apart in the heavenly glory to be the present object of our hearts, so that we may be more and more formed like Him, and know His separation from every principle of this world as the only measure of ours.

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THE coming of Christ is the next great step in the ways of God. His purpose is to remember first, among all those given Him of the Father, the weakest, those upon whom corruption has fed—the dead in Christ shall rise first.

The second will be to clothe living saints with their house from heaven, swallow mortality up of life, and change their bodies into glorious ones after the model of His own.

The third to conduct them to the presence of the Father, to enjoy the home of divine delights, in company with the Son and Holy Ghost.

I AM loved of the Father ; a necessary part of His plans for the happiness of His Son. A certain King made a marriage for His Son. All is being arranged for the nuptial day, the bridal morn. I have been separated from this world ; His hand is moving me on to my own special place in His house, a Rebekah for the true Isaac.

Am I moving in that direction ? Is the bright and morning star fixing my gaze, am I responsive to the drawings of the Father and the Son ?

Do you say from the bottom of your heart, " Come, Lord Jesus " ? If not, what hinders ?

" BEHOLD, I come quickly." That thought should be like oil on the troubled waters, or rest for the weary body ; His blessed Person and His coming for us should ever be near our heart. We are to both hope and wait, in the calm quietness of faith, knowing that delay means the calling of others. When the last is called, He will surely come. The completion of His body, the complement of His bride, alone causes His chariot wheels to tarry ; His longsuffering is Salvation. Let us wait on in patience of hope ; He will surely and certainly come, and that " quickly."

HOLINESS of walk, entire separation from the world, girded loins, and lights burning mark the saint who is walking with God and waiting for His Son from heaven.

WE are not a common people, we have no right to be scraping earth together ; we are citizens of no mean city, heirs of a great inheritance, a company of royal and holy priests—a crown of glory, life, righteousness, waiting to be placed on our brow.

Let us beware of minding earthly things, lest we deny our citizenship, belittle our inheritance, soil our priestly garments, and forfeit our crowns.



## To-Morrow.

(D. GRIMSTONE).

Do not many of our troubles come from seeking to look into the future and anticipating what *may never happen?*

If God has cared for us so far—in spite of our fears—let us go on in the path He has marked out for us, seeking to prove what is His good, and acceptable, and perfect will, and we shall find each day something to thank Him for; and learn that the love which gave Christ for us never fails. If I am in the path of obedience results must be left with God.

Instead of wanting to peer into to-morrow, or have our future—even for a week—laid bare, let us rest in the knowledge that a Father's care is ever over us, who has counted every hair on our heads, and without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground. He has said, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

He loves us too well to let *us* see sorrows ahead, but *He* both *sees* and *provides* for them. Can you not say, looking back "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us?" Have you not found Him "a very present help in trouble"?

What we need to be grounded in is the love of God. Was Paul depressed by trying circum-

stances, or elated by providential interpositions? He tells us he is so satisfied that whatever comes will be overruled for good, that he is content with a Roman dungeon, and not only rejoices in the Lord there, but calls upon others to do so.

Bright days and stormy days were all one to him; as the cares came he rolled them on God, made his requests known, left the way and the manner of the answer to God, and meantime was kept in the enjoyment of the peace of God.

The only to-morrow he knew was Christ in glory. Yesterday He died for us, to-day He loves and cares for us, to-morrow we are to be with Him.

Not a step in the wilderness do we see until we come to it, but our eternal future is laid out before the vision of our souls. We may confidently anticipate a bright to-morrow, a glorious future, when tears, cares, sorrows will be things of the past. On our way we can count upon the love that has planned and provided a home, a crown, and a throne for us.

Casting all our care upon God, assured He cares for us, we may leave to-morrow and its cares

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where Scripture puts them, as God's concern not ours.

Has He not pledged Himself for to-morrow in the words, "I will never leave thee."?

Jacob in his wanderings — Joshua, in his conflicts—found this promise their stay and support. Solomon handed it on to Israel at the dedication of the temple, and Paul passes it on to us couched in the very strongest language: "I will never"—in no wise, on any account—"leave thee nor forsake thee."

Let us accept the pledge He

gives, count upon His being true to His word, pour out our sorrows into His ear, make our requests known, and we shall find grace sufficient unto the day, *but none for to-morrow*. Committing our way to Him, making His service our chief business, we shall surely prove that, if His interests are our care, our needs will be His concern.

If we deny Him, He abides faithful. He is the same yesterday, to-day, for ever. His love in time past forbids us to think He will leave us at last in trouble to sink.

## Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks.

(E. E. CURTIS).

*"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks"*  
(1 THESS. V. 16-18).

Joy, dependence, praise, are to characterize us. We are to rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks.

Heaven is a scene of increasing delight; every repentant sinner makes its vaults ring with joyful songs, but that which fills those glorious courts with rapturous enjoyment is the presence of Jesus. He ever fills God's heart. Before all worlds He was daily His delight; He was equally the One in whom His soul delighted in this world; whilst the seat on which He sits, the crowns be-decking His brow, speak of God's present satisfaction in Him.

Surely He who fills all heaven with joy is more than enough to fill our tiny hearts. It is in Him we are to rejoice *evermore*; this joy is to be continuous.

Think of the disciples oppressed with sorrow at His departure; how their hearts drooped as they thought of being bereft of His presence. How does He console them? "I will see you again, your hearts shall rejoice, your sorrow shall be turned to joy, and your joy no man taketh from you."

The joy He spoke of was not to be intermittent as wave follows wave; out of the death and resurrection of Christ the eater

has brought forth meat, out of the strong, sweetness and abiding joy. They had lost Him for a while, sorrow endured for a night, but the resurrection morning dawned—a day without a night—and a risen Christ brought gladness none could take away.

Nor did their joy lessen when He ascended. Travel to Bethany, behold Him with hands extended in blessing! Whilst in the very act He was carried up into heaven, conducted *on* the glory cloud *into* the glory from whence He came.

Raised from the dead by the Father's glory, Stephen beheld Him in the glory of God. His face shone as an angel's; joy filled His heart, just as it did that of the disciples, who returned to Jerusalem praising and blessing God.

The death and resurrection of Jesus has opened up a new region of joy. Gaze upon the mighty victor, look at your ascended Lord. Fulness of joy, pleasures evermore, are His portion—and *yours*.

Never lose sight of a risen, ascended, coming Jesus if you would rejoice evermore.

There are many other ways in which joy may be ours. Keeping his commandments, our joy will be full (John xv. 10, 11). Asking and receiving (John xvi. 24). Occupation with the word of life. Communion with the Father and the Son (1 John i. 4). Anticipa-

tion of the day of glory (Rom. xv. 13). These are some of the ingredients in our full cup; but it is His love, His constant, unchanging love, that ministers to us that fulness of joy which enables us to go through this weary world with a shining face and deep inward joy.

Everything around tends to depress and cast us down, but when engaged with Him where He is, and abiding in His love, constantly drawing from the infinite resources of His grace, compassion, and pity, we are lifted above, "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." Our circumstances may produce deep exercise, but if we are only rolling our cares upon Him, pillowing our heads upon His bosom, though He may not change the circumstances, He will lift us above them, and give us to know what it is to be in the joy in which He dwells.

Next we are told to "pray without ceasing." That means we are to be constantly dependent. Constant prayers are not necessarily long prayers. Have you ever noticed the shortest prayer in Scripture came from Peter's lips when in trouble? "Lord, save me." Immediately the Lord's hand was stretched out for his help.

There may be moments when we feel we are about to sink; difficulties, trials, sickness, poverty, pressure of every kind; but His hand will be outstretched

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to us if we cry to Him. He is watching us, and knows everything. Our part is to lift heart and voice upwards to Himself, and make our difficulty known,—to pray without ceasing.

No matter what circumstances, trials, or difficulties we may be passing through, everything is under the hand of infinite wisdom and eternal love. We learn what God can be to us and do for us in the circumstances through which we have to pass. How He can sustain us in deep, blessed joy, so that we rejoice evermore, and give thanks in everything.

Christ as a Man was marked by prayer and rejoicing. In the midst of most untoward circumstances, you find Him in Matthew xi. turning to His Father and giving thanks. When His ministry had been refused by Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; when John Baptist, His forerunner, had questioned His true Messiahship—the man who had boldly stood as a witness on the banks of Jordan, and proclaimed Him God's Lamb, the only begotten of the Father, Israel's long-looked-for deliverer—there seemed to be utter failure in those He sought to serve and in those who had once served Him, and yet at that moment we find Jesus rejoicing in spirit and saying, "I thank thee, O Father."

Did He not turn everything into prayer? When the crowds were thronging and pressing Him,

He retired into the wilderness to pray. He is seen rising early in the morning, and going into a solitary place and there pouring out His heart. As difficulties and trials increase, His enemies rise against Him. What is His resource? Behold Him! His Nazarite locks wet with the night dews, on bowed knees on the mountain-top, praying to His God.

Next, in *everything give thanks*, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. We have met Christians who knew what it was to have had a fairly easy path until they turned to God, but after they were converted troubles came. They wondered at this, could not understand why before they were converted things went smoothly, whilst since the sea is rough and the winds contrary. May not the epistle in which these exhortations are found supply the answer? Those early Christians to whom this exhortation was addressed we might suppose were in the May-day [of Christianity,] [the bursting out of the flowers, the singing of the birds, the sunshine smiling upon them, and so could rejoice always; but when we study the epistle, we find that they had received at the hands of their own countrymen what the Jews had from theirs—had known affliction and the spoiling of their goods. Then their loved ones were being taken away.

There was persecution without and trials within, affliction, bereavement, but the Apostle says, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God"—mark you, *the will of God*—"in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Ah, these things had come since they were converted, but their affliction was mingled with joy in the Holy Ghost. Well, then, do not be troubled, do not be dismayed, if sorrows come; depend upon it, every blow is needful. The One who loves you perfectly will never allow a single thing to come upon you but what shall work together for good.

Look at Joseph. He might have said, "All these things are against me," when he found himself in the pit and in the prison. How were his dreams to be realized? How could his father and brethren bow down to him?

*We know* it was through the pit and the prison that he ascended to the throne; this is written for our comfort. If it is the will of God for you to pass through trouble, sorrow, and pressure, He has an end in view: it is to bring about His bright designs, to have you more and more like His beloved Son while you are here, before He takes you to that place where you will be seen altogether in His likeness. Knowing this, we may turn everything into an occasion of giving thanks. What! you exclaim,

thanks for this trouble, this difficulty, this heart-rending sorrow I am passing through? Scripture answers: "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." How David, like Paul, traced everything up to God. In the sixty-sixth Psalm he says: "which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved." How? Listen to the answer: "Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place."

Ah, that is the way He works to hold our souls in life. Were our bark to be ever sailing upon a smooth sea, no contrary winds, no stormy waves, that would be very dangerous for us. We should be settling upon our lees. If we attempt to do so the storm comes and disturbs us; this is not our rest, it is polluted. Blest is the tempest, kind the storm, that drives us nearer home.

If affliction comes let us trace it up to Him; if men ride over our heads—or, more trying still, our brethren do so—let us accept it all as from His hands. He is holding our souls in life, and though we may be tried, as silver is tried, it is to bring us forth into a wealthy place.

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## John's First Epistle.

(Condensed Notes of Address  
by JAMES BOYD).

THE epistle begins with fellowship and unfolds the sphere of its enjoyment. The object of the gospel is that we might be brought into the apostles' fellowship. Their fellowship was "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." The apostles

THE NATURE OF THIS FELLOWSHIP. were the first to be in that fellowship; but it is not *confined to them*. Were it so no one could be in it to-day, and all the teaching regarding it would be useless. The early believers are said to have continued in the apostles' fellowship (Acts II. 42). Here we are told with whom that fellowship is. We read of the fellowship of God's Son in 1 Corinthians I. 9 because it has been brought about by Him, from Him it emanates; also of the fellowship of the Spirit in 2 Corinthians XIII. 14, because it is enjoyed in His power; but here in 1 John I. 3 it is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is a fellowship of life, connected with the propagation of Christianity and the carrying out of divine counsel.

The sphere of this fellowship is in the light; that is, in the presence of the full revelation of God. It is not a question of the *manner* of our walk, but of the *sphere* in which we walk. The

THE SPHERE IN WHICH WE WALK. babes in Christ are there as well as the young men and fathers. There are different degrees in which the light is apprehended by those designated babes, young men, and fathers; but it is the same light that is apprehended, be the measure of the apprehension large or small. We are there in all the value of the blood, without which the light would be intolerable to us.

We will next look at the kind of person who is in this fellowship. Up to this point we learn the sphere *where* the person walks; from this forward we are told *who* they are. It is the children of God who are in this fellowship, those born of God (II. 29).

The new birth is not peculiar to this dispensation. Abel was born of

THE KIND OF PERSONS WHO ARE IN THE LIGHT. God, and all along the history of the world God had those in relationship to Himself, but they were never brought to light until Christ came. They came to light then by their reception of Christ. To such He gave the right to take their place as children of God (John I. 12). The basis of it was His death for them on the cross, and

consequent thereon opening out a new order of blessing with God in resurrection. To this the Father has called us in His great love, and the Spirit gives us the consciousness that we are children (Rom. VIII. 16); and all such are in this fellowship.

There are two great distinguishing marks of the children of God in this epistle; one is in chapter III. and the other in chapter IV.

The first is *righteousness*: "He that doeth righteousness is born of him." This is developed in the third chapter. Two MARKS. You also get love alluded to there, but righteousness is the subject, just as love is in chapter IV.: "He that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."

I judge a person to be righteous or otherwise by his altar; that is, by his approach to God. Does he come to God by the sacrifice of Christ or not? This will let me know if he is righteous or wicked. And I judge the love of a person by his readiness to surrender his life for the children of God. He loves what is of God in the world, because he loves God.

Then we come in chapter V. to the three witnesses—or witness-bearers—who bear witness to the great fact that God has given to us eternal life in His Son. It is because this gift is ours that we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The water and blood came forth from the side of a dead Christ and witness to us of the value of that death: in the first place, as that which has made expiation for our sins, so that they are gone judicially for ever from before God; in the second place, the water witnesses that that death has cleansed us from the defilement of the flesh, for that state has been ended judicially for ever. These are looked at here as *witnesses*, not *agents*. They witness to me of the value of His death, which has, on the one hand, made an end of my sins, and on the other, of myself as in the flesh. And the Spirit, come down from Christ glorified, tells me of the power of life in Him risen, and as dwelling in me gives me to know that that life is mine in His power.

Then in chapter V. 20 we have the subject of the whole epistle condensed into one verse. "We know that the Son of God is come."

The way in which we know this is, we are in the light which He has brought. If we are neither blind nor asleep we know when the sun has risen; and the way in which we know it is we are in the light which it sheds abroad. God having made known Himself, we are in the light of full revelation, and we know that the Son of

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God is come. He has declared God, and opened our eyes so that we might be able to take in the light of that declaration. He has given us an understanding that we might know Him that is true. There is no need to tell us who that is. *God alone is true.*

Satan and men get power over their dupes by presenting themselves in a false light. They dare not come out in their true character.

If they did their power would vanish. But God works by the revelation of Himself, for He is true. And we are in Him that is true. We possess His life and nature. We are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He, the Apostle says, is *the true God and eternal life*. In Jesus I find the true God and eternal life, and I know that every-

thing else is an idol. And now as knowing the Father and the Son, and as possessing the divine life and nature, and as having the Holy Spirit dwelling in us as the power of that life and nature, we can have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, and thus have full joy.

*A man upon the throne of God ! Is it possible ? Yes, but for One only ; for no other man is what He is—God—on an equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the self-existent One, Jehovah's equal and fellow. Attractive in beauty, fairer than the children of men, there is none in heaven or on earth comparable to Him. His name is Jesus. What a wonderful Man He is ! His ways and thoughts so unlike ours, He found in the cross a platform on which to display perfect obedience, all moral glories shining forth, and at the same time was unmistakably demonstrated to be God ; for no one less than God could tell out His mind or meet His claims, none but an absolutely perfect Man stand in our place and bear the judgment due to us. He has done both.*

*God says the blood on His throne satisfies Him. We say the blood on our consciences satisfies us. We have an accepted sacrifice, our consciences are perfect.*

*We must start there. Are we to stop there ? If you found yourself among the harps, the thrones, the crowns, and no Jesus there, no slain Lamb, would you be satisfied ? No, you would not ; conscience is not all, affection must have its object, the heart must be satisfied, and none save yon glorified Man, the sum and substance of all perfection, human and divine, can truly satisfy ; but He is enough the mind and heart to fill.*

*Look ever and alway to Jesus ; rest not alone on the blood, but upon Him who shed it.*



## God's Temple Christ's Bride.

(H. NUNNERLEY).

ONE object engages Heaven to-day. The Holy Ghost is on earth to gather *out* of Jew and Gentile a bride for the risen and glorified Jesus. That bride is the fruit of counsel and purpose, and is the especial object of Christ's ardent affection. She is also the temple and dwelling-place of the living God. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, speaks of her in various ways, presents her in many lights, and as connected with far-reaching glories.

Writing to those who lived in the temple city of the tutelary deity of Asia, he uses expressions pregnant with meaning and of peculiar force to those who had once worshipped at the shrine of the world-famed goddess.

Her worshippers claimed that Diana, the many-breasted divinity of the Ephesians, had "fulness" for all her votaries. Paul shows how she is eclipsed by a fulness far exceeding hers, and tells them of the fulness of times, the fulness of Christ, and the fulness of God, and exhorts them to be filled with the Spirit.

Then Diana was also said to be the goddess of earthly blessings; especially of rivers and harbours. Paul soars upward and heavenward; unfolds a sphere of rich and lasting blessing outside, above, and beyond the earth, conducts us to the fountain of all good, God the Father, and shows us the *heavenlies* as our harbour of rest and security, sets us beside the river of God's good pleasure in having us as sons before Him in love.

The term "heavenlies" marks the scene of blessing as not of, or in, this world, but linked up with what is outside it. It is a wide term; it includes the air, but reaches far beyond. The highest part accessible to the creature is the third heaven into which Paul was caught; the lowest, the air, is now occupied by fallen angels; whilst the central portion appears to be the home of those unfallen beings, who are not in the elevated sphere, where God dwells in unapproachable light, and yet are near enough to hear His commands and obey His behests.

It is in the *heavenlies* at God's right hand Christ is seated, and in Him all our blessing is secured.

In chapter III. the all-varied wisdom of God displayed in the church becomes the lesson-book of principalities and powers in the *heavenlies*, seraphic, cherubic, and angelic students learning " manifold wisdom " in it.

Then in chapter VI. from the *heavenlies* comes the deadly opposition,

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headed by Satan, against the conscious possession and enjoyment of their heavenly portion by the saints.

In chapter I. we are told there is a fixed period in the divine counsels, termed the "fulness of times," when all things heavenly and earthly shall visibly and openly be seen in Christ's hand. Grasping the sceptre of universal dominion, an absolute monarchy will be His, such as the greatest earthly potentate, in his most ambitious flights, never contemplated. Things and beings, whether terrestrial, aerial, or celestial, shall acknowledge His supremacy; at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow; He will be owned as universal Lord by all created intelligences.

With Him in this scene of widespread glory the church will be associated, not as reigned *over*, but as reigning *with* her Head and Lord. It is *in Him* she obtains an inheritance, and it is *in her* He inherits "all things," when those things are "*gathered together.*"

This word "*together*" occurs again in chapter II. There the world is viewed as a vast graveyard. Christ in grace having descended into the lower parts of the earth, is raised by Almighty power and seated in the heavenlies. Then, wonder of wonders, we learn that we, who by nature are morally and spiritually dead, are quickened, raised, and seated *in Him*. We are privileged to travel from His grave to His throne, in His own blessed company, "*together.*"

We also read of a spiritual house, a holy temple, "*framed together*" and "*buildded together.*" The Ephesians had before their eyes the graceful Ionic temple of Diana, they had witnessed the laying of the very solid substructure, needed by the swampy nature of its foundation, and would well understand the allusion to the "foundation" of the apostles and prophets and the "chief corner stone" in the temple of which Paul wrote.

Diana's temple—erected by the co-operation of her worshippers,—was both her home and her shrine, her dwelling and place of worship. But both temple and goddess are no more. Not so the temple and habitation of which Paul speaks. Its foundation, laid at Pentecost, added to by the living stones built in at Ephesus, still exists and grows; it is a holy temple; every whit of it uttereth glory. God has chosen it for His habitation, *He dwells in His saints*. The Holy Ghost is here.

The temple is a living structure, shortly to be displayed all glorious, when it will command the admiration, not only of Asia, but the entire universe, every part of it proclaiming the skill and wisdom of its Divine Builder.

The worshippers of Diana also claimed she was the productive cause

of the nutritive powers of nature, supplying sustinment to her votaries. The next occurrence of the word "together" claims this for Christ. He is the Head from whence all nourishment flows for His body, the church. Its increase, its nutriment are derived from Him. It is edified, built up, in love, being fitly joined "together."

The Church is a living organism, each part transmitting (from Christ in glory) those supplies which promote its vigour and increase its stature. Love is its sap, its way of growth, its enlarging principle. It is nourished as well as cherished, and abides as proof that the Head and the body are livingly bound up together.

Where is Diana? Where is her mighty temple?

Only recently have its foundations been discovered amid a few mud huts. What was once one of the seven wonders of the world is no more; but the church of God remains, the body of Christ is here, as tenderly cared for, as truly nourished as in the brightest days of the saints to whom Paul wrote this epistle; it still grows to a holy temple in the Lord, every saint being added thereto.

How each chapter, in other forms of expression and under other figures, proclaims the wonders of this mystery, this great secret, now revealed, of Jew and Gentile forming one new man with Christ as Head. On bended knees Paul prays we may enter into that glorious inheritance which Christ will possess in the saints—His body—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (chap. I.).

He also tells us we are citizens of no mean city; we belong to a holy, heavenly, new Jerusalem, and are connected with the family circle, being of the "household of God" (chap. II.).

The day of glory will see the church singled out from all created intelligences as the special object of God's favour, the vessel for the eternal display of those excellencies and perfections which emanate from the blessed God (chap. III.).

Then in chapter IV. every evangelist, pastor, teacher is a gift to the church from the ascended Christ; they tell of His care, they are His love gifts; their mission is to perfect the saints, to build up His body, until they reach the stature of the fulness of Christ.

In chapter V. we reach the climax. We are carried back to Eden; we see in Eve, presented to Adam, not only one who is *of* his flesh and of his bones, but who is brought into a relationship the nearest and most precious of all relationships. The holy bond of marriage sets forth the tie which binds together Christ and the church. She is loved with an affection peculiarly her own. Others of the redeemed are the objects of the pitying love of a Saviour, have experienced the providential care and goodness of God, but it is reserved

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for the saints of this dispensation to know a love beyond a brother's, more than that of a friend; a love of which Michael and Gabriel, Enoch and Abraham, Moses and Elias, David and Solomon, patriarchs, prophets, and kings, knew nothing. It is the deep, fervent affection of the Bridegroom for the bride. He has fitted her in life and nature to respond to His affection, she is as truly *of* Him as Eve was of Adam.

Then how He has loved her!

Think of her Lord in that bygone eternity sharing, as by equal right and title, homage with the Father; behold the seraphim veil their faces, all heaven bowing at His feet, the angels esteeming it an honour and joy to do His bidding. Rich in glory—how rich no mind can grasp, no thought conceive, no tongue tell—then think how, out of love for His church, He left wealth and honour, glories and dignities, and became the companion of wild beasts in a foodless desert, having no place to lay His head—homeless, houseless, penniless in His own creation; now on cold mountain-top, anon on storm-tossed lake, then under the broiling midday sun; weary, hungry, thirsty. He the rich one had indeed become poor. Out of love for the church, that pearl of great price, Christ sold all that He had. Nor did His love stop here.

Follow Him to deeper, darker depths of misery as in Gethsemane's garden He utters strong cries, pours out bitter tears, sweats great drops of blood. Let us trace His holy footsteps to Calvary, where, forsaken of man, forsaken of God, His cup of misery overflowed, and under the darkened heavens He yielded up His breath.

He not only loved, sold all He had, but, last of all, *gave Himself*. This was the climax of love to His church; this was affection's best, largest, supremest gift; He had no more to give when He had given *Himself*.

Nor does His love cease with His life; for He has taken His life again, and cleanses and sanctifies, nourishes and cherishes the chaste virgin He died to win.

He *nourishes*: sustainment and support flow from her living Head. He *cherishes*: many and great are the tokens of His love, deep and fervent His affection for her.

Then how ardently He looks forward to the day when He will *present* her to *Himself*. This will be the consummation, the full cup of delight for bride and Bridegroom. Suited in life and nature, one in thought and feeling, their joy shall be mutual and eternal. When the abiding state is presented to our gaze, the church is seen in all the freshness and beauty of her espousals, the chaste virgin, then the

acknowledged wife of the Lamb, in all the graces, and adornments bestowed upon her on the bridal morn.

What a study this Ephesian epistle is ! In how many and varied ways the church is unfolded in it ! One body nourished by one Head. One spiritual house where God now dwells. One new man *out of Jew and Gentile*. One *company distinct from all other companies in glory*. One circle where the ascended Christ distributes gifts. One bride, the supreme joy of the Bridegroom, loved as intensely, as devotedly, in the ruined state of things to-day as in those bright days, when Paul indited this epistle to those who had renounced Diana for Jesus.

### Yon Glorified Man.

(F. PATERSON.)

TRAVEL to Samaria's well, behold Does this sight of Jesus satisfy in that weary, thirsty Man, God your heart and give you rest ? manifest in flesh ! The heart rests Are you afraid of His turning and gazes in wonder on such a over the secret and blotted pages scene. It tells us God has de- of your life ?

scended from the fiery mount; that If so, travel onward to Calvary. He is no longer demanding, but There all your bad, black past was giving. laid upon Jesus ; every open sin,

That poor sinful woman had every secret one, came to light— been deprived by sin of every pre- God who knew them laid them on tension to righteousness, had Him ; and there the full measure merited nothing but the curses of divine wrath was poured out of a broken law, and here she is on the sinless One when made sin followed in grace to the far dis- —when He bore our sins in His tant country, where sin had own body on the tree—gave Him- driven her from God ; her alien- self a holy victim.

ated heart won back to the The cross is the demonstration God against whom she had of perfect love to the sinner, per- sinned, in the revelation of Him- fect righteousness against his sin. self in perfect, absolute grace. None but Jesus was capable of Searching her heart to its bearing the judgment due to us, deepest depths, convicting her drinking the cup of wrath, ex- conscience, and at the same time hausting it, so that none re- drawing out her confidence, so mains.

that she can say to others, Has He met the holy claims of " Come, see a Man which told me God's throne, and put your sins all things that ever I did ! " away ? Is your conscience at ease ?

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If not follow Him from the cross to the tomb, from the tomb to the resurrection morning, from the morning of resurrection to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Behold Him a *Man* at God's right hand, *the glory of God shining in His face*.

Every ray of that glory tells its wondrous tale. The sins He bore on the cross gone, and gone for ever, their full penalty paid, the life in which He was vicariously charged with them given up, they lie buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness—righteously buried and forgotten.

The Purger of Sins has entered heaven and left them behind; every ray of that glory proclaims

that for God and for faith sins are gone.

With upturned eye and unveiled face, we gaze into the heavens and see Jesus crowned with glory and honour; the glory shining in His face streams into our hearts in all its transforming power; our prayer is—

“O fix our earnest gaze,  
So wholly Lord on thee,  
That with Thy beauty occupied  
We elsewhere none may see.”

There full, abiding satisfaction is alone found. Jesus in the glory of God has settled every question for time and eternity—the conscience at rest—the mind filled—the heart can now delight in yon glorified Man!

## Pergamos.

(W. TAYLOR).

PERGAMOS signifies “marriage”; the name is suggestive of that unholy alliance of the church and the world which took place in the days of Constantine, a compact which continues to this day.

When Christians were thrown to wild beasts and burnt at the martyr's stake, they gave a brilliant testimony to Christ and preserved the unworldly character of the followers of a rejected Lord; but when Christianity became the state religion—except in very rare instances—leaders held places of authority in church and state, and thus obscured and practically denied their pilgrim character.

Worldliness was both practised and preached, pagan festivals given Christian names, the Lord's day called Sun-day. Heathen religion and pagan philosophy corrupted the pure teachings of Christ. The church and the world (which had hitherto walked apart) were locked in each other's arms, consequently its character as a witness for holiness and truth was falsified.

This state of things exists to-day. Are we awake to its awful character?

One brief sentence from the searchlight of God's Word reveals the Lord's estimate of it: “I know thy works, and where thou

dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." Christians, unmindful of their heavenly calling and of the church's espousal to Christ, are now living on intimate terms with the enemies of their Lord! They "mind earthly things." Seeking political influence and worldly power, they have allied themselves with the ungodly, and actually dwell—find their home—where Satan's throne is!

In this letter to Pergamos the Lord recalls the days when suffering existed for His name's sake, wherein Antipas, His "faithful martyr, was slain," days that are past and gone! Terrible indeed was the sword of persecution; but is there not something far worse, even the *sword with two edges*? "Fear not them which kill the body . . . but fear Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him."

The time has come when judgment must begin at the house of God. Will it affect the security of the sheep of Christ? Not in the least. Jesus said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish."

The warning is intended to awaken repentance in any who have ears to hear. The sword will surely smite the lying prophets who corrupt the faith. The star of Christendom will set in deepest gloom, but a bright future awaits those who heed the warning voice.

There is also a present reward for those who overcome. Faith which clings to the risen Christ ensures victory to the believer, for it hangs on Him who has already overcome the world. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Manna was the wilderness food for Israel. It was God's provision for them, after they had left Egypt and its flesh-pots, to follow the Lord "into a land that was not sown." Some of it was treasured up in a golden pot in the ark of the testimony before Jehovah. This, or what it typifies, is the special portion of the overcomer in a corrupt Christendom. The hidden manna speaks of the once-humbled Christ; of that perfect life of devotion to God which was laid down in death for us, now hidden from the world, but treasured up in the presence of God as food for our souls.

We are to feed on Him, and as men take character from their mental fare, so as we Christians daily appropriate Christ He will be reproduced in us.

Antipas, who fed on the hidden manna, became a "faithful witness."

What is our food? New Theology, or the pure mental milk of the Word? The former yields no spiritual nourishment, though it feeds the flesh and exalts man; but the Scriptures exalt Christ. Peter enjoins that as new-born babes we should desire the sin-

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cere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby unto salvation.

The salvation we specially need to-day is deliverance from the influence of a worldly Christianity, from the voice of the "foolish woman, who hath forsaken the guide of her youth, and transgressed the covenant of her God."

What marks a babe is instability; hence we are urged not to remain children, but to grow in grace and in knowledge. The Apostle John rejoiced over the young men because they were strong and the Word of God dwelt in them. They had overcome the wicked one, their senses were exercised to discern good and evil. For lack of this discernment many Christians are tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. How important to hold fast the Scriptures, to submit to their authority, to allow them to operate in us, so that we may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. Look also at the encouragement held out. A white stone, on which a new name is

written, which no man shall know, saving he that receives it.

Antipas, no doubt, knew something of that "secret name of undisclosed delight," but the Lord has also given him a public name—it is written on the pages of Scripture—"My faithful witness." Let us seek to be this. If we are not all successful servants we can all be faithful ones.

Now is the time to earn distinction in the Lord's battles. Soon the conflict will cease, and He shall reign whose right it is. The devil will then deceive no more, and truth shall prevail. Sin and its consequent evils will be banished, and good and right will triumph.

At the end of the Book God says: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be His God, and He shall be My Son." May we have ears to hear His voice, so that instead of being overcome of evil, we may walk in holy separation from the world politically, socially, and ecclesiastically, and thus earn our Lord's "Well done."

## I AM IN CHRIST.

*All His fulness is mine, grace upon grace. Of His fulness we all have received, not one more than another, all sharing equally. All that He gives me He gives to all His own. Paul had no more of His fulness than any of us.*

CHRIST IS IN ME. *What an*

*amazing spring of blessedness to realize this as my link with a scene which is to be filled up with His glory. This is equally the portion of all—Christ in us, the hope of glory. To know Him in that glory was the end and aim of Paul's life. Is it ours?*



## A Jealous God.

(W. H. WESTCOTT)

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)

Therefore his sisters sent unto him saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.

Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.

When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

... when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.

Then when Mary was come where

BETHANY appears to be one of the very few places in the whole of Palestine where the Lord could make Himself at home. It was a spot where He found an ear for what He had to say with regard to the Father, and where His pure human affections were drawn out; for we are told: "*Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*"

But a great sorrow had come into the household. The very spot on earth that seemed the nearest to heaven was allowed to feel the withering blast of death. When Lazarus fell sick, they sent to the Lord in the hope that He would come at once, and arrest the disease and prevent its reaching such a sorrowful climax; but no, though the Lord received their message, knew their desire, entered into all their sorrow and pressure, He allowed matters to go on to the dreaded end. Lazarus died, and the consequence was that His action was very unintelligible to those who surrounded the household. "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

They wondered, as we sometimes wonder, why it is that the Lord allows distressful sorrow and crushing bereavement; why He does not come in and deliver. We go to the Lord, and it seems as though He neither heeds nor hears.

Nor is the loss of loved ones our only trial. Many sorrows press upon the saints in a world where it is becoming increasingly difficult to live; what business disappointments and worries there are. We cry to the Lord, we say, "We have told Him about it, surely He will deliver"; and somehow or other, it has not been His way to deliver. The blow that we feared has fallen; we wonder, and think how can it be that no deliverance has come?

*Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.*

JOHN XI. 1-6,  
31, 32.

We think also of the sorrows of the beloved church of God, of the place she has in the affections of Christ, of the love of the Father who has given her to Christ, and of the fact that each individual saint is the subject of divine affections. Yet if we look at her actual state we are tempted to exclaim, Does God love the church? Does Christ care for His saints?

We have seen troubles impending, afflictions looming, sorrows pressing, and when we have cried to Him He has not arrested the disaster. Why did He not prevent the catastrophe? The breach has come, the sorrow is here, and all the pressure of it, as though it were the pressure and the bitterness of death itself.

The Jews who came to comfort Mary, seeing her rise up hastily, said, "She goeth to the grave, to weep there," to weep in hopeless sorrow. Perhaps some of us are inclined to think all hope is gone, and have allowed despair to seize us, since our loved ones have been snatched from us, our business shattered, our earthly hopes dashed to the ground, and, worst of all, our expectations with regard to the saints have received a bitter check; and here we are scattered, cleft, broken, with the bitterness of death upon our spirits. It may appear as though we have nothing to do now but to sit down and mourn and weep over all the sorrow, just as the Jews thought that Mary went to the grave to weep there. But instead of going to the grave with all the pressure of hopeless sorrow, she went to the feet of Jesus.

That is where God wants us to go, no matter by what means this end is reached; only let us accept the pressure from Him, and just get right to the feet of Jesus with it; this is His aim in all His ways with us.

I was rather struck in our reading this morning in the last chapter of Luke. You remember how the Lord led His disciples out as far as Bethany, and then He lifted up His hands and blessed them, and was parted from them and carried up into heaven. Why, surely, if there were a place that might have detained Him, it would have been Bethany, the one spot on earth nearest heaven to His spirit. Worship, service, adoration were all there; but Bethany was not the Father's home, so He says, "I cannot leave your spirits even here; I must have you go right away from this world in every shape or form it may assume to you; I do not want you to linger even in Bethany; I want you to go clean out of it all to where I go." Their spirits might have hoped to rest at Bethany, but He leads them further still, up to the right hand of God.

It may be we have thought that if I join this or that company, I may find a Bethany for my spirit, and I may settle down, and I may really go on with a free and happy spirit, without any hindrance, to serve my Lord. Well, it is all right to find Bethanys here, but, brethren, if our hearts stay in Bethany the Lord will smash it up for us ; He will roll death in ; He will break up everything, if thereby He may get our affections for Himself.

Do not you desire this ? Is it not worth while that He should detach our affections from even the best things down here, from what sight and sense would build upon, and just draw us up to Himself alone in the glory ? Yes, the Lord has such an affection for us that it is akin to jealousy. I have been reading in Exodus a little bit lately, and I thought the nearest revelation to the Christian revelation comes out there where it says, " The Lord thy God is a jealous God." Do you not see, love takes the form of jealousy if there is the smallest rival to it ? The nearest revelation to the Christian one of love that could be given in Old Testament times is that God is a jealous God. You remember Solomon's Song says that love is as strong as death. Do you know what follows ? It is that jealousy is as cruel as the grave. Jealousy is the form that love takes the moment that there is a rival, and if the Lord sees we are going to set our hearts on anything down here, building up some little system for ourselves, clear of this error and the other error, He will smash it all up, because it would very soon be an object to us and draw us away from Himself. What He claims and what He wants is that we should be wholly and entirely for Himself. He draws us up by one method and another. Yes, there is death, there is the pressure, there is the break-up, but what is it all for ? Well, I think it is that He is knocking at the door in the break-up. In the third chapter of Revelation He says, " Behold, I stand at the door and knock " ; and that is what He is doing by the bereavement, by the pressure, by the break-up. He is knocking. " And if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." I will take My last meal with the man who has got a heart for Me.

May the Lord just write the desire in our hearts to respond with undivided affection to the true and undivided affection He has for us, and trust Him to order our pathway according to the love of His heart and the skilfulness of His hands.

*THIS is not our rest—it is polluted. Onward and upward must be our motto.*

*NIGHT is nearly over, so mind you walk worthily of the day in practical Nazariteship.*

## The Lord's Presence.

(H. P. BARKER).

*Thou hast rebuked the heathen,  
thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast  
put out their name for ever and ever.*

*And he shall judge the world  
in righteousness, he shall minister judgment  
to the people in uprightness.*

*The Lord also will be a refuge for  
the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.*

*Sing praises to the Lord, which  
dwelleth in Zion: declare among the  
people his doings.*

*The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked  
is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaiion.  
Selah.*

PSALM IX. 5, 8, 9,  
11, 16.

PERHAPS no scripture has been more misunderstood and misapplied than that which assures the two or three gathered to the Lord's name of His presence in their midst (Matt. XVIII. 20).

Many of the older commentators interpreted it as a promise that the Holy Ghost would be present for the comfort and blessing of those gathered. They affirmed that the Lord would thus be present *by His Spirit*. But surely something further than this is intended by the familiar and precious words.

Some, who until recently seemed to enter into its true meaning, now say the Lord is not in the midst of those gathered until a particular moment. The words "till He come" (1 Cor. XI. 26) are said to refer to His coming into the midst; and we are told that it is "not until *after* the Supper is over that He comes"!

John XIV. 3 is quoted by others as referring to the Lord's presence in the "assembly," where He "receives" those gathered to Himself, and where a fulfilment of the words "where I am, there ye may be also" is reached.

Mystical theories of this kind carry their own refutation. Others in outward fellowship with the propounders of these strange ideas seek to combat them by going to the opposite extreme. They

dèny that the Lord is present in the midst of two or three gathered to His name in any other sense than that in which He is always present with His church.

It is a great truth that the Lord is, always has been, and ever will be with His assembly. We truly and gladly sing:—

"When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,  
Has gathered thick and thundered loud;  
*He with His church has always stood;*  
His loving-kindness, oh, how good!"

But *special occasions* are in view in Matthew XVIII. 20, not merely the general truth of His presence, but that special way in which "two or three" gathered to His name are to know His presence.

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If it be said that this scripture primarily refers to gathering for *prayer*, we cordially agree. The promise of verse 19 is based upon the fact of verse 20. But the fact is stated in such a way as to give it a far wider application, and to make it available to the faith of two or three gathered in days of brokenness and apostasy to that holy and blessed Name.

Of course the reader will not suppose that the *bodily* presence of the Lord is affirmed. Though possessed of every divine attribute, and therefore omnipresent, yet bodily "He is not here" (Mark xvi. 6). He is absent, seated at the right hand of God. But in a very real way He is present, personally, in the midst of two or three gathered to His name. This truth we need to hold with a tenacious grasp, all the more so as some appear to be giving it up.

If the presence of the Lord is a great reality to us, we shall assuredly be affected by it.

Will the reader turn to Psalm ix. as an illustration of what is connected with the Lord's presence? First observe the place this psalm has in the group to which it belongs. Psalm viii. gives us *the Lord's name* excellent in all the earth, as indeed it will actually be in the glorious day that is coming. Psalm xi. speaks of *the Lord's throne* and connects it with heaven in direct contrast to the "man of the earth" in Psalm x. 18. Psalm xii. brings before us the pure *words of the Lord*. But in Psalm ix. the great point seems to be the *presence* of the Lord (ver. 3) and its results. Of course, the presence of the Lord as enjoyed to-day in many respects differs from His presence as manifested in the day to which the psalm refers. But it is the same blessed Person in each case, and the characteristics of His presence are the same, though taking different forms.

We desire to call attention to six marks of His presence, given in this psalm.

(1) *The judgment of evil* (ver. 5). Those to whom the Lord's presence is a reality will be marked by a holy intolerance of evil, in whatever guise it shows itself. Nor will they confine their abhorrence to evil which appears from without. They will be conscious of the utter unsuitability of *the flesh* to the presence of Him who is holy and true, and they will therefore be marked by deep *self-judgment* and humility.

(2) *Submission to the rule of Christ* (ver. 8). His authority will be owned, and there will be the full recognition that all that *He* does is righteous. The place of supremacy will be gladly accorded to Him, and ready obedience will be rendered by His saints.

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(3) *The place of His presence will be attractive to the oppressed* (ver. 9). Many of the readers of these pages have experienced the bondage and oppression of unscriptural and systematized religion, and have found relief therefrom in the presence of the Lord, when gathered with "two or three" to His name. Alas, have we not to confess that instead of making that place attractive to others, we have introduced that which has repelled the "oppressed" and driven them, in their "time of trouble," to seek refuge in other directions? How the thought of this should humble us in the dust!

(4) *Praise* (ver. 11). By and by the whole glad universe will be vocal with the praise of Him who is Jehovah-Elohim. All creation will burst out in happy song, and adore Him "for His mighty acts" and "according to His excellent greatness" (Ps. CXLVIII. to CL.). In the assembly this is anticipated. Indeed, a song is ours in which creation can never join. As taught by the Son Himself we can join in the song that only sons can sing, the song of which Christ Himself is the great Leader.

(5) *Testimony*. "Declare among the people His doings" (ver. 11). The realization of the Lord's presence will not induce apathy or fatalism. It will tend to make us whole-heartedly evangelistic; we shall go forth from His presence to spread the glad tidings of grace and glory far and wide. If any claim to be "beyond the gospel," so advanced in knowledge that he holds himself absolved from the responsibility of spreading the glad tidings amongst the lost and the sinful, the state of him who can entertain such an idea is thereby exposed. *The presence of the Lord* is either unknown to or has not had its due effect upon such an one.

(6) *The knowledge of God* (ver. 16). In a future day Jehovah will manifest His righteousness and power in the judgment of the wicked. But is there not a meaning underlying this statement? If not, why those two words "Higgaion" and "Selah" (meaning "Meditation" and "Emphasis")? May we not read this sixteenth verse in the light of *the cross*? Has not God declared Himself by the judgment which He executed upon Him who suffered there for us? Where else can such a disclosure of the heart of God be found? And may we not say, that those to whom the presence of the Lord is a reality will be marked by their delight in all that God is, as declared in the cross? They will make much of Calvary. With reverent and worshipping hearts they will dwell on the sorrows and sufferings of the Lord Jesus, and feast on the infinite love that was the underlying cause of all. They will appreciate the wonderful unfolding of the thoughts of God, the disclosure of the Father's heart.

In pointing out these marks of the presence of Christ, we do not in any way attempt to *spiritualize* the teaching of Psalm ix. It is undoubtedly a prophetic psalm which will have its literal fulfilment in an age yet to come. But may we not truly say that what will characterize His presence *then* in an actual and public way characterizes in a spiritual way His presence as known and enjoyed by His saints to-day?

May the Lord help us increasingly to value *His presence*, and to seek too that others who have never tasted the joy of it should be brought to know its deep reality. It is available for all, and as true to-day as ever, that "where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

"I AM My beloved's, and My beloved is Mine." Herein lies the secret of rest and satisfaction. I am Christ's. I belong to Him. He has purchased and redeemed me. I am loved by Him. He gave Himself for me. I am necessary to His happiness. He waits to welcome me in courts above.

WILDERNESS sorrows, pilgrim fare may be ours; trouble, trouble, trouble — nothing but trouble around; but in the midst of it all a voice reaches us: "Let not your hearts be troubled. . . . I go to prepare a place for you."

It will not be always breaking hearts, perplexing circumstances, the hard flints of the desert, but peace, rest, joy, pleasures for ever more, for the voice is again heard: "I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

GOD is our hiding-place—Christ the vessel in which we are hid in God. All the springs of grace and peace are in God for us.

Oh for more concentration of heart on the Blesser and the One in whom we are blessed, so that our glad occupation may be to retire into our hiding-place, and make the sanctuary redolent with praises to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings—in the beloved of His bosom, the One who dwelt there from all eternity!

THE Father's centre, end, and object in heaven and eternity is now to be our centre, end, and object in time and on earth.

Which occupies us most, the sorrows of the wilderness, or the God who can turn the wilderness into water-springs?

## Ephesians.

QUESTIONS ON CHAP. I. REPLIES BY J. A. TRENCH.

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus :*

*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ :*

*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love :*

*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the for-*

ARE the "faithful" a class distinct from ordinary saints?

The address "to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus" does not imply two classes. "Faithful" is brought in as indicating (in the words of another) those who by grace faithfully maintained the faith they had received.

Will you name some of the spiritual blessings of verse 3?

All the blessings spoken of are spiritual in character, and heavenly in the sphere of them; instead of material and earthly, as with Israel in Canaan; possessed too in the richest way in Christ. Our place before God in Him, our relationship with the Father, our acceptance in the Beloved, with the full revelation of heavenly things that being blessed in the heavenlies involves, are some of the blessings; as also the inheritance of glory. Nor must the seal and earnest of the Spirit, so essential to our enjoyment of any part of the blessing, be left out.

What is the force of the word "heavenlies"?

They are the sphere of our blessings (I. 3), of Christ's exaltation (I. 20), of our revealed position in Him (II. 6), of our highest testimony (III. 10), and fullest conflict (VI. 12, "high places"—A.V.—being the same word as in the other cases).

Does "in Christ" refer to the ONE in whom the blessing is, and the heavenlies, the sphere of blessing in contrast to an earthly Canaan?

"In Christ" is essential to the whole truth of the epistle as it is to the Christian position in every aspect of it. But here the point of view is the eternal counsel of God. Before the history of man in responsibility opened, God had Christ before Him as the Man of His counsels in whom we had our place



*givenness of sins, according to the riches of his grace ;*

*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence ;*

*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself :*

*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him :*

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will :*

*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*

*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased posses-*

according to those counsels. Now He has opened them out to us, we must seek to view them from His standpoint. The ages of time are of no account here ; we were " chosen in Him before the world's foundation."

*Is " chosen in him " individual or corporate ?*

It is our individual place as He saw us in Christ. Corporate relationship will come later ; but the individual saint is ever God's first concern (see IV. 12).

*Is " holy and without blame before Him in love " present or future ?*

Present or future has no place here. If God has chosen us in Christ before time began, it is in all that Christ is ; and when Christ was manifested here this will have been manifested in the place He had before God. Behold Him as the object of the opened heavens in Matthew III. 16, 17. Was He not holy, and without blame, and in love—out " before " the Father's satisfied gaze ? That is, then, what we were as chosen in Him in eternity. It is not yet even the activity of His counsels, but simply the restful choice of His own nature. He chose what suited Himself, and expressed Himself in what He chose, as we all do in our measure. How marvellous when we hear in such a connection " According as He hath chosen us in Him before the world's foundation "—to be all that Christ is to Him, the object of His own delight !

*In what way can we be said to be " without blame " ?*

As seen in Christ in the eternal thoughts of God. Hence it becomes the object of Christ's service in His love to the assembly (v. 26, 27), " that He might present it to Himself . . . holy, and without blame," for the word is the same. Its state in glory will answer perfectly to what God saw it in Christ.

*What is the difference between predestination, election, and " chosen " ?*

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sion, unto the praise of his glory.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ;

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him :

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

What we have in verse 5, where we come to the good pleasure of His will, serves to bring out the distinct place of predestination, which is always to something, as state or relationship. "Elect" and "chosen" are the same word.

*What is the force of the word "adoption" ?*

Simply "sonship" : it is all one word. We are predestinated to "sonship." It would have been wonderful if God had taken us up to be angels in His counsels ; but this would not have satisfied His heart. He wanted sons.

*Why to "Himself" ?*

"To Himself" expresses this so blessedly. "Having predestinated us unto sonship by Jesus Christ to Himself" brings out the relationship we have had in His counsels, "according to the good pleasure of His will." All through it is not God meeting any need of ours, but what He planned for Himself. And this enhances the blessing of the position for us infinitely.

*What is the "good pleasure" of His will ?*

The expression "good pleasure" is the same as in the praises of the heavenly host at the birth of Jesus. "Good will in men" they can say, for it was the dawn of the accomplishment of the everlasting counsels of God, in the Man of His good pleasure, though for others to be associated with Him in such a place. His death was needed, or He would have been alone for ever as Man.

*Why is it said "glory of His grace" in verse 6, and "riches of His grace" in verse 7 ?*

That we should be accepted or more fully "taken into favour" in the Beloved would be such a revelation of God's grace that it would redound to the glory of it for ever. "Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," meets us in the poverty of our need, according to the riches of His grace, which is very precious, though not the same fullness of grace in the revelation of Himself.

*Other replies in July issue.*

## What are the Marks of a Divinely Gathered Company ?

DEAR BROTHER,—As far as I can see, a divinely constituted meeting embraces three thoughts.

First, its relation to the Church's *Head* in heaven.

Second, its relation to all the interests of Christ in all His own everywhere.

Third, the full recognition of the absolute and irremediable ruin of the Church set up as a responsible witness for God on earth, so that no part of it can in any circumstances assume to itself the position or prerogatives that belong to the whole in its corporate and undivided state.

In the day of the Church's ruin you cannot look to the Church for light or shelter ; and the very question, "What is a divinely gathered company ?" may easily become a very great snare, if the mind dwells upon it. Where two or three are gathered to the Lord's name, He will vindicate the value of that name in all its import, and this is the stronghold of faith for all time ; but to attach the Lord's name to the gathering, instead of the gathering to the Lord and to His name, would be but to repeat the fatal mistake so often made, and to invite His chastisement instead of securing His support.

If I am following the Lord with full purpose of heart, and you are doing the same, then we shall be in company with one another, drawn by the Lord Himself ; and a company so gathered will be "a divinely gathered company," according to 2 Timothy II. 22.

Yours in this desire,

E. CROSS.

## Extract from a Letter.

"I WAS looking over J. N. D.'s first tract, *Nature and Unity of the Church*, and was much struck by the sentence : 'To suppose therefore unity, where the life of the church falls entirely short of the just consequences of its FAITH, is to suppose that the Spirit of God would acquiesce in the moral inconsistency of degenerate man, and that God would be satisfied that His church should sink below the glory of its great Head, without even a testimony that He was dishonoured by it.'

"What he means by the faith of the church seems to come out in a later page, where he says : 'No meeting, which is not framed to embrace all the children of God in the full basis of the kingdom of the Son, can find the fulness of blessing, because it does not contemplate it—because its faith does not embrace it.'

"This seems to give the clue to the breaches God in His faithful testimony has permitted to come on us.

C. W."

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## Four Assembly Meetings. (Notes of an Address).

THE first scripture we will turn to is Matthew xviii. 20 : "*Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.*"

The centre of attraction is the name of Christ, the gathering power is the Holy Spirit, the sure result the presence of our Lord. No meeting lacking the Lord's presence is properly an assembly meeting. The Lord being in the midst, control and direction are necessarily in His hands ; we look to Him objectively, whilst subjectively the Spirit, ever acting in perfect concert with Him, produces a responsive state in us.

The first meeting we will consider is

### THE PRAYER MEETING.

We begin with that because it is brought out specially in Matthew xviii. The Spirit is there to produce and direct prayer, without Him we cannot ask what is fitting ; but it is not His method to produce repetition in prayer.

Suppose brother B—— is ill. Some brother prays that if it be the Lord's will he may recover. Another is directed to pray that the Lord would bless the sickness to brother B——'s soul. Another prays that his wife and children may be sustained in their hour of

trial ; whilst one more asks that this brother's illness may be blessed to the salvation of his unsaved children. In all this there is no repetition, each one asks for something different. Suppose, instead of this, one brother prays that brother B—— may get better and twenty others do the same. Do you not see that in so doing you lose the sense of the fact that the assembly of God is *one*, the speaker being the *mouth-piece of all* ? When one brother prays in the assembly it is the assembly praying.

A servant of the Lord (now in glory) was told that some thought *he* ought to have prayed about a special matter. He simply said, "It has gone up ;" meaning that some one else had done so during the prayer meeting. If these things were more simply understood, and acted upon, in subjection of heart to the Lord, our prayer meetings would be fresh, the interests of Christ would be predominant, and petitions would not be mere repetitions.

If twelve brethren are gathered together with the consciousness that the Lord is there, and each of them engage in prayer, they can present twelve distinct petitions. In a prayer meeting there should be simplicity and largeness of

heart, as well as variety, in our requests. We are to pray for *all saints* and for *all men*. This is the will of God. He has vast interests in the church and in the world, and if that be remembered and acted upon it will give character to our prayer meetings. We must never forget we do not go to a prayer meeting to pray for *ourselves*, we go to pray for *others*. There are some meetings for prayer we look back to with joy. Why? Because the interests of Christ were paramount; His things engaged the saints; and the time was not taken up with imparting information to each other and the Lord, instead of interceding for others.

#### THE MEETING FOR BREAKING OF BREAD.

This, like the prayer meeting, is a meeting of the assembly. The Lord is in the midst. Who that understands its character would turn it into a prayer meeting? Surely none who are rightly instructed. Nor is it exactly a "worship meeting," though worship will mark it.

We find in Acts xx. 7 that the disciples came together. For what? To break bread. There was only one object before them. In the loaf and the cup our adorable Lord is brought before us in that never-to-be-forgotten moment when He gave up His life in death. It is a remembrance, a recalling of Himself where He

once was, where He is no longer. As one with Him in resurrection we look back, and contemplate the deep, blessed love expressed at Calvary, the sorrow He passed through. It is our absent Lord we remember; not His agonizing sufferings only, deeply solemnizing as these are, but the One who suffered in absolute obedience to God, in perfect love to us. "It is a dead, betrayed Christ whom we remember. His offered body is before our eyes at the Supper, His shed blood claims the affections of our hearts. In the Lord's Supper the heart is brought back to a point in which it is entirely dependent, in which man is nothing, Christ and His love everything." This will produce worship and adoration. How gladly we sing:—

"Lord Jesus, we worship and bow at Thy feet,  
And give Thee the honour, the praise that is meet,  
While through Thee, O Saviour, our praises ascend  
And swell the loud chorus that never shall end."

The more truly and simply our affections are drawn out to His person, the more entirely we are engaged with the love shown in His death—whilst breaking bread together—the more heart and voice will express to God our Father the glad worship which the Spirit produces in us.

The breaking of bread, the remembrance of our Lord, is the object for which we come together in assembly. Thus gathered we

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lose our individuality; as we break bread together we express the great truth that we, "being many, are one body." We are gathered—even if only two or three—in the faith of our oneness with Christ and each other; we embrace no less a circle than the entire church of God in our thoughts; we have no other centre than the Son of God—the Christ of God—Jesus the risen Man—the Head of His body the assembly.

We do not come to the breaking of bread to *pray*, or *get something for ourselves*, but to *remember* the Lord.

Being thus gathered, if our souls are in a right state, the entire meeting will be marked by adoration, thanksgiving, praise, as our souls dwell upon the love of God in giving His Son and the love of the Son in giving Himself. We are givers there, not receivers; but we give what has been given to us—"Of Thine own have we given Thee."

Then in 1 Corinthians xiv. we read of another assembly meeting. Neither prayer nor the Lord's Supper is the object for which it is convened; it is distinct from both. Its special purpose appears to be for the ministry of the Word; for

EDIFICATION, EXHORTATION,  
AND COMFORT;  
in order to build up the saints in their most holy faith, unfold the

mind of God, and minister food in due season in such a way that God in all things may be glorified by Jesus Christ.

Such a meeting is not exactly a conference or a reading meeting, although it may partake of the character of both; its use was probably better understood in earlier days. It partakes more of the character of what is termed an "open meeting;" but such a meeting may or may not be an assembly meeting. It all depends what object has drawn the company together, on what ground they are gathered.

If Christ's name attracts and His authority is owned, how the Lord delights to edify His people! But let us remember He not only gives the gifts, He is there to control them. If this were truly owned, how it would keep every one subdued in His presence! Who does not know the unseemly way in which some brother who likes to hear himself speak will absorb time unprofitably? Edification is the true end of ministry. If saints are not built up, stirred up, or lifted up, we may safely gather the speaker was not directed by the Head of the assembly, he was not a prophet with a message from God for His people.

The Lord's presence should solemnize each one, and some very useful questions for a forward brother to ask himself are: Have I the Lord's mind in speak-

ing? Is it a message from Him? Would this company come together if *I were announced to speak?*

Two or three speakers is the rule laid down for such a meeting; though, where a third speaker manifestly speaks in the flesh, a fourth may convey the Lord's mind without violating the *spirit* of this injunction, as edification is the object of such a meeting.

It is a "building-up" meeting. Its object is to comfort, sustain, strengthen, and edify. It is quite distinct from the meeting for prayer or for the breaking of bread. It is a meeting we ought not to dispense with. If we are gathered to His name, He is there in the midst. In the prayer meeting we come to *beg*, to the reading or lecture to *get*, to the breaking of bread to *remember*, to the worship meeting to *give*, and to the edification meeting to hear what *God has to say to us*, and He knows just what we individually and collectively need. It is most encouraging to remember God knows each of us perfectly and has perfect love for each one. The edification meeting is one where the Lord can edify, teach, train, and build up His own. What a wonderful meeting this is; some think they can do without it, but they are losers thereby. Both a Bible-reading and a conference are good, but the edification meeting spoken of in 1 Corinthians xiv. is quite

distinct from these, being a gathering of the assembly, as such, in any given place.

The fourth meeting of the assembly is for

#### DISCIPLINE,

when saints are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to deal with one whose walk is unsuitable to the holiness of God's house. The Lord is in the midst to personally direct the meeting. It is not a prayer meeting (although prayer will doubtless be offered for wisdom to act aright), it is a meeting held for the purpose of dealing with some question of sin in a brother or sister. The assembly must enter into what that sin is in the sight of the Lord *as if it were their own sin; must identify themselves with the sorrow and shame of it.*

This meeting is not constituted to act as a criminal court, merely to pronounce judgment on an offender. The Lord's object in discipline is with a *view to recovery*; not the destruction of the *person*, but the destruction of the *flesh*.

We must not get out of the sense of this, otherwise it may degenerate into official hardness. If no other course is open but exclusion, the person being unrepentant, Scripture directs that such an one is to be debarred from assembly privileges, put back into the domain where Satan

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rules for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. v. 4, 5). But note how solemnly all this is to be done.

First, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Next, when gathered together in assembly.

Then, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Excision declares that the person is unfit for Christian fellowship anywhere and everywhere.* Either in morals or doctrine he has utterly failed to maintain the holiness of God's house and must be refused.

Discipline meted out because of divergent views on points which do not touch fundamentals has no sanction in the Word. All solemn judgments arrived at as affecting the Holy and the True will be ratified in heaven, *but no others.*

A few brothers cannot put away. A thousand cannot either, *if merely gathered in conference*, and not to the Lord in the locality where the matter should be properly dealt with.

Unless gathered according to the order laid down for God's assembly, their decisions are merely human, they lack divine sanction.

How much saints have departed from the plain directions of Scripture in these matters! Prominent brothers—often far away—have

been known to formulate the *decisions of a meeting before it is held*, and send such decisions to be ratified afterwards by the meeting concerned. On the other hand, decisions solemnly arrived at in the *presence of the Lord* after *long waiting upon Him* have been set aside by brothers' meetings elsewhere.

How much we need to get back to the plain, simple directions of God's Word in these matters!

Then how lightly excisions and divisions are wrought! Where is the brokenness of heart? Where the floor of the meeting-room wet with tears? Where the sense of the dishonour to our Lord Jesus? Where the pain of being separated from true children of God; real members of Christ's body? How much worse when widespread divisions are forced because of divergence of judgment on matters not fundamental, without an atom of Scripture as a warrant for them!

Let us seek to cultivate that tenderness of spirit, that deep compassion for the erring, which will not lead to callousness as to excision, or indifference as to the recovery of those excluded, even where Scripture plainly teaches the person is to be dealt with because unrepentant.

Until we get back to that tenderness of spirit, and view these matters as they affect the Lord, *not as they affect us*, there will be no real power manifest



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in the assembly to deal with sin according to God, or to discriminate between offences calling for excision and those needing pastoral care and brotherly counsel.

Let us recapitulate.

### 1. *The Meeting for Prayer.*

Here we are gathered to pray for God's interests and the needs of others; not for ourselves individually—this we should do at home.

### 2. *The Meeting for Breaking of Bread.*

The disciples came together to break bread. That was their object. Do we know the purpose for which we are gathered together? Are our minds filled with it? Do we own the Lord in the midst directing the whole meeting? We meditate on Him, remember Him in death, and without effort we bow in worship before Him.

### 3. *The Meeting for Edification.*

We are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the truth of the one body, and He is there in the midst to minister to us. He knows us and what we need, and He ministers to us.

### 4. *The Meeting for Discipline.*

What is bound on earth is bound in heaven. All the saints on the globe could not bind sin upon a man or a woman if the Lord were not in the midst. They have neither power nor authority for binding or loosing; nor could they do either unless they had scriptural warrant for their action, a "Thus saith the Lord," even if rightly gathered.

May we each be more exercised as to the varied objects and distinct characters of these four assembly meetings.

## Fellowship.

(JAMES BOYD).

I DESIRE to add a few words to that which has appeared in the pages of *Our Calling* on the subject of fellowship, as we have it in the epistles of John. I sought to point out in the address delivered at Lowestoft (the substance of which appeared in the May number of this paper) that the fellowship into which we are brought is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," in the light of the full revelation of God. Although there may be

different measures in which that light is apprehended, there is no other *sphere* of light—darkness holds sway everywhere else. Only those born of God are in this fellowship; such are distinguished by doing righteousness (chap. III.) and loving the brethren (chap. IV.). It is in this fellowship eternal life is known and enjoyed, for this fellowship is a fellowship of life.

In the second epistle limitations are placed on fellowship. Those who do *not* bring the doctrine

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of the Christ are to be *refused*. Fellowship is here guarded and circumscribed by the *truth*; only those bringing and walking in *truth* are to be received, all others are *excluded* as being outside Christian fellowship.

In the third (on the contrary) *all* who bring the *truth* are to be *received*. Diotrephes may raise ecclesiastical barriers, refuse those who walk in truth or seek to minister it to others, and cast out of the assembly any who welcome such; but John condemns such conduct, and exhorts us not to imitate what is evil, but what is good.

The danger in one epistle is in *reception*, in the other in *exclusion*; the truth is the test in both cases. The Roman governor asked: "What is truth?" Had he been divinely taught he might have seen it personified in the Prisoner to whom the question was addressed, for Christ is the *truth*. In Him we learn all that *God is* in the full revelation of Himself; and in Him we learn what *man* is according to God's eternal thought. The truth as to God, the truth as to man, the truth as to the Father and the Son, and the relationships in which believers stand with these Divine Persons; the truth as to righteousness, salvation, and eternal life; and the truth as to atonement, on the basis of which these blessings can alone be ours—all is known in the measure

in which we know Christ, for He is the truth. The gospel is the word of truth, the Scriptures are the record of it, and the house of God upon earth is the pillar and base of it. The truth judges everything which is contrary to it, and becomes the test for all practical *fellowship with one another* in the midst of religious corruption; and hence the prominence given to it in these two short epistles.

We have said the second epistle tells us whom we are to exclude. The one who brings not the doctrine of Christ has not God. He has neither part nor lot in "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," so we must not have anything to do with him. He is not in "the light," where we have fellowship with one another; therefore we do not receive him as a Christian. But more than that, he is a tool of the devil, "a deceiver and an antichrist," and will corrupt the saints of God, and therefore he is to be an object of abhorrence to all who love Christ.

One would naturally think the rejection of such a teacher would be a very simple matter, and would be unfailingly carried out by all the people of God. But evidently this is not always the case, for John contemplates the fact of a professed saint being on very good terms with such. We naturally shrink from being considered narrow-minded and bigoted; and

when we allow such considerations to take possession of us we are apt to drop into indifference as to Christ. To receive such an one as a true believer in the Son of God would be to manifest indifference as to the honour of Christ, and self-confidence in our ability to keep ourselves from defilement when associating with an evil-doer. We read: "He that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds," and such must be treated by all who desire to be faithful to Christ exactly as the deceiver himself. Therefore the people of God should keep themselves far from those who, while professing their abhorrence of the doctrine which dishonours Christ, leave an open door for such teachers to come in their midst. It is evident to any one who knows anything of the unity of the church of God that it is not enough for me to exclude such a person myself, if I walk in company with those who admit him. The only way in which I can clear myself from his company is to refuse all those who admit him, or who leave an open door for him to come in at. Let them close the door upon all who company with such a person, and thus demonstrate their own fitness for Christian intercourse.

But after this question has been settled, and it is perfectly settled in my mind, never to be opened again, other questions arise with regard to Christian intercourse; questions which may not be so easily settled as this one. I do not doubt the Scripture is plain enough regarding all questions, but we may not be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and hence we are puzzled and perplexed about things which lie plainly and clearly on the very surface of the Word of God.

In the days of the apostles such a thing as an open rupture among saints would scarcely have entered into any one's mind. There were those who went out (1 John II. 19), but such were apostates from Christianity, and their going out was the thing that manifested that they had neither part nor lot in Christ. There were always divisions, sects, and parties in the church; but open separation was a thing unknown, as far as we have any light from Scripture, whereas in the present day the slightest disagreement on any subordinate question is enough to divide the saints of God all the world over. And once a division of this sort takes place, healing is supposed to be impossible. This question we shall consider in our next issue.

*We are called to maintain the truth of God's assembly; and walk in the revelation of it as the house of God, the temple of God, and the body of Christ.*

*Let us not seek to escape the responsibilities by giving up our privileges. We are in dark and difficult days, but if we count upon God all will be well.*

## Four Attacks.

(DR. WARREN).

THE Second Epistle of Timothy discloses various ways in which *truth* may be attacked. They may be described as defection, corruption, imitation, and coercion.

## DEFECTION.

Chapter I. reveals the sad ending of Paul's service in Proconsular Asia. Phygellus and Hermogenes are named as guilty of defection, but Ephesus and all the Asiatic saints had also deserted the Apostle; they had turned away from him. The verb here is in the aorist, signifying one definite act, which appears to have occurred on the occasion of the arrest of the Apostle by the imperial authorities.

To turn away from the Apostle was to relinquish the truth he brought; not necessarily to give up Christianity, but to lapse into a lower spiritual condition, and consequently avoid the keen edge of persecution, by lowering the standard, and this has marked the church ever since. But the truth ministered by Paul remains. Holy Scripture has preserved it in health-giving words, and we are to seek—like Timothy—to have “an outline of sound words” in the actual *form* the truth was communicated.

This outline, or comprehensive grasp of the truth, is not to be confounded with a creed, which

can be repeated as a mere mental process, but is to be in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. Only thus can the truth be a vital force, either to myself or in quickening power to others. Moreover, the good deposit is to be kept by the Holy Ghost, man's mind being powerless to retain, or maintain, the truth inviolate apart from His power.

How often the carnal state of a Christian hinders both the reception and practical maintenance of the truth in power (see 1 Cor. III. 6). Let us see to it that we do not allow that which will cause us to give up any truth we once held in power, and that our state does not prevent us from getting a larger acquaintance with God's mind in His Word.

## CORRUPTION.

Chapter II.—Hymenæus and Philetus are vessels to dishonour, their teaching is compared to a gangrene; they have gone astray from the *truth*. Probably these teachers claimed a spirituality out of the common, pretended to new light when proclaiming the resurrection to be already past. Anyway, they have left a numerous progeny, some declaring our actual body will not be raised, that the soul sleeps as well as the body, that all men are “potential Christs,” that men

will have another chance after death, etc.

From all such the man of God is to stand apart. He must not defile himself by associating with these corrupters, but purge himself from them. Happily we are left in no doubt as to what Scripture calls "vessels to dishonour."

They are such as Philetus. Profane babblers. They find their counterpart to-day and their teachings have eaten into nearly every system and confederation. Hence we have to separate from all who hold unsound doctrine, or are immoral in practice whether collectively or individually, or who refuse Christ and the Holy Ghost their true place in the church.

Individuals sound in the faith and godly in walk do not come under the heading of vessels to dishonour. They may not see eye to eye on certain points of doctrine, may differ in their *application* of certain scriptures, not deduce the same conclusions from them as others; but if walking uprightly, maintaining the truth up to the light they have, we are bound to receive such as members of Christ's body. Separation among true Christians, truly gathered to Christ in the truth of the church, merely because of divergence in judgment, is a thing unknown in Scripture.

Division when fundamental truth is in question is a matter

of obedience to the Word, but division for *anything less* is a sin of the greatest magnitude and absolutely contrary to the Scripture, which enjoins us to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

#### IMITATION.

Chapter III. brings before us a more subtle attack. It is by imitation of the truth, a form of godliness, an external profession, devoid of spiritual vitality; with a pretension to what is of God. This may be found in unexpected quarters, and among companies widely divergent in other respects. Jannes and Jambres simulated the miracles wrought by Moses, and in this way nullified his testimony, resisting the truth, by a spurious reproduction.

What is our safeguard? "Continue" on the one hand, "turn away" on the other. Hold fast to the pure Word of God, continue in Paul's doctrine, cleave to the truth, leave everything else aside. The Word of God not only makes wise to salvation, but is effectual armour for those walking in obedience, complete equipment for the man of God.

If our spiritual state is in accord with the doctrine, our manner of life, our walk and ways morally right, and everything tested by the things we have "learned" of Paul, then the imitation of the truth will not deceive us, however great the pretension of those who

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claim to have it, and however insidiously presented.

## COERCION.

Chapter iv.—The attack from a hostile world is direct opposition and open persecution. This gives occasion for the truth to be presented in kingly circles and among the great ones of the earth. Forsaken by Demas, evilly treated by Alexander, forsaken by all, the Apostle was sustained by the presence of his faithful Lord, who stood by him in his dire need.

He adds: "The Lord shall

deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." Surely we may say this also of the truth. Its triumphant career is assured, in spite of the world's hostility; and the testimony of God shall be maintained, if only in a feeble remnant, until the church is translated to participate in the heavenly kingdom.

Meantime we are not to be unduly occupied with the evil, but live in spirit in the joy of the day of manifested victory, passing onward like Jonathan "working with God" (1 Sam. xiv. 45).

## Reception.

(G. V. WIGRAM).

*THE great danger, as to access to Communion, may be on either side, so far as we are concerned with those who really are the Lord's, but who have not knowledge and intelligence of mind, yet have spiritual love.*

*To the known world the door is shut.*

*If we press what would protect us as man's mind thinks, we find out Communion has knowledge only as its turning-point: "If you know, you may come into communion with us." This shuts out the Annas and Elisabeths, the Simeons and such-like, and is a falsification of the Lord's table and of truth.*

*It is a sect and nothing else.*

*If, on the other side, we are too*

*free in our accessibility, we may either really dishonour the Lord by letting the world in, or cheat saints exercised in the spirit about themselves. I would receive all thereto who have faith in the Lord and are walking up to their light, and yet bring before them the responsibility of it in them, and the judgment which will light on them from the Lord, if they come to Him WHERE HE IS, unjudged and unpurged.*

*Of course, I would desire to watch that no ecclesiastical difference which I can be glad to see the holder, if he have life, jump over, be a cover for moral evil.*

*The moral evil rises above the ecclesiastical question altogether.*

## The Love which is Ours.

(A. CUTTING).

ON the Cotswold Hills a gentleman took me into his garden and showed me seven little springs. I said, "It is remarkable to see seven springs so near each other;" but imagine my surprise when he said, "You are looking at the source of the Thames. Those springs join in that field, and go on and on, until they become the river, crossed by all those mighty bridges, which empties itself out into the North Sea."

If you started at its mouth to trace it upwards, beyond Gravesend, Greenwich, London, Windsor, then back beyond Reading, Oxford, and farther back still, up and up and up amongst the Cotswold Hills, through that field, and into that gentleman's garden, you would find in those seven bubbling springs the source of the River Thames.

Did you ever trace the river of God's love to its source, past the foot of Calvary, past Gethsemane's garden, past the guest-chamber in Jerusalem, past Bethany, the gate of Nain, the carpenter's shop at Nazareth; farther back, past the cowshed and the manger; farther back still, up and up and up, past angels and archangel, principalities and powers, might and dominion, up and up to the very bosom of God? Instead of seven

little springs you will reach a mighty ocean of everlasting love flowing out in a river full of blessing to man.

The Egyptians have been drinking for centuries of the waters of the River Nile, but none ever troubled to trace it to its source. The world may be indifferent to the source of all good, but we Christians should explore until we reach the fountain-head of all our blessings—the heart of God.

If you met Paul in heaven and asked, "How did you, the chief of sinners, come here?" he would answer, "Because God so loved." If you met the thief who died at Calvary and asked, "How did you come here?" he would reply, "Because God so loved me," a thief! The first man to enter Paradise was a condemned criminal. Up from the lowest depths of degradation, guilt, and sin, right away to the heights of glory, my Saviour carried one of the devil's castaways. What can He not do after that?

Let me quote you four scriptures as to God's love. The first shall be: "*The Father loveth the Son*" (John III. 35).

"The Father loveth the Son." Now let me ask, how much do you think the Father loves Jesus? What is the extent of

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His love? What the measure of the love of the Father to Jesus? You say, "Who could measure that? It is immeasurable, infinite! The love the Father bears for Jesus knows no bound; it is absolutely impossible for anybody to measure the Father's love for Jesus." Then you accept it as an actual fact that the Father loves the Son with a love you cannot possibly measure? "Yes."

Now turn to John xvii. 23: "Thou hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

Here is the Father's love resting on you. You see that love descending from its source—what is its measure? "As thou hast loved Me." And what is the measure of that? "Well," you say, "you cannot measure that."

Then if you cannot measure the love of God to His Son you cannot measure the love of the Father to you. Why? Because the same love that rests upon His Son, as Man, rests on you. If you cannot measure one you cannot measure the other. But you can open your heart widely to take it in. Only think of it; we are loved with the same love with which the Father loves Jesus. Do you think you will be loved better in heaven than you are now? Do you think the Lord Jesus will be loved better when you get to heaven than He is loved to-day? "No," you say, "He has all the love of His

Father resting on Him, He cannot be loved more perfectly." Then if He is loved perfectly you are loved perfectly, because the measure of the Father's love to Jesus is the measure of the Father's love to you.

You say, "I wish I could realize that." Realize it? You believe the truth of the Father's love to the Son without realization; one is as much a fact as the other. Fact number one is "the Father loves the Son;" although you cannot realize it, yet you believe it. Fact number two is that the measure of the love that the Father bears to the Son is the precise measure of the love He bears to you. Why demur at believing this because you do not realize it?

Is Jesus loved to-day? So are we. Is Jesus free from death and judgment? So are we. Is Jesus the Beloved of His bosom? So are we; it is in the Beloved we are accepted. You could not mention a single thing of the Lord Jesus Christ (apart from His Deity) but what is true of the believer in Christ whilst in this world.

Perhaps you say, "I do not think God loves me like that, because I am in very trying circumstances." Please do not measure the love of God by your circumstances, but measure your circumstances by His love. If His love is perfect (and it is), He will never do anything less for you than the best possible. You



may not see through His ways now, but He loves you, and He will never love you more in heaven than now, and He makes all things work together for good.

Now let us turn to John xv. 9: Jesus is speaking.

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you."

*"As the Father hath loved Me."*

That which is the measure of My Father's love to Me is the measure of My love to you. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." Think of that when times are hard, circumstances difficult, business worrying, those dear to you suffering; look up and say, "Here I am, an object of the immeasurable, infinite, everlasting love of two divine Persons, the Father and the Son. How much does the Son love me? As much as the Father loves the Son! Do you know why you are going to heaven? Because you are necessary to the Father and the Son. You are enshrined in their affections, the Father loves you just as He loves Jesus, and Jesus loves you with the same intense affection that the Father has for you. That will make heaven heaven. When you get there you will find the Father's love flowing out in all its fullness to the Son, and the Son's love flowing back in blessed response to the Father, and the Father's and the Son's love beating down upon you with their warm, genial rays, and your love going back to

the Father and the Son in full response. Heaven is the place where divine affections flow without let or hindrance; all will be perfectly realized there, when from Father to Son, and from Son back to the Father, and from Father and Son down to the redeemed, all the affections of the Bride to the Bridegroom, the children to the Father, will be responsive.

Now look at John xv. 12: "This is My commandment, that ye love one another." How much? "As I have loved you." How much is that? "As the Father hath loved Me." You say, "That is the line I break down on." Why? Because you are not in the enjoyment of the Father's love to you, and in the enjoyment of the love of Jesus to you; and the consequence is your heart chills in your affections towards those loved of the Father and the Son. If you find your affections getting cold and chilly towards God's people, it is a proof you are not in the sensible enjoyment of divine love. Search what needs judging in your ways, bask in the sunshine, keep yourselves in the love of God until divine affections are awakened, for every one that loveth Him that begat loveth them also that are begotten of Him. See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, after the manner and measure of the love shown to you.

## Come unto Me.

(J. MOODY).

*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.*

*Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in thy sight.*

*All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.*

*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

MATT. XI. 25-30.

THERE is a glory connected with Christ in His own blessed Person, as *Son*, that no finite mind can enter into. But He has been here to communicate the mind of God to men, and to do a work which has introduced us into a relationship in which we can know God as our Father, in which we can be with the Son as Man before the Father's face. It is our privilege to know what it is to be in conscious relationship to God our Father, to know Him in that unclouded joy in which He dwells, know Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and through infinite grace "our God and Father."

The first step toward this is the response to the invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Take that verse in its setting, what a thought is here ! The cities which had listened to His gracious words, beheld His works of power and goodness, the beloved nation to whom He had come and for whom He had come, were either utterly callous and indifferent, or in avowed opposition. Deeply, poignantly He felt this indifference on the part of some, hatred on the part of others ; yet in the midst of it all He had a resource, there was *One* to whom He could turn.

"At that time Jesus answered and said." He had such implicit confidence in the wisdom of God, His Father—the Lord of heaven and earth—who had hidden the things He came to make known from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes, that He can "praise." He not only manifests entire submission, but utters an adoring note : "I praise Thee" (N.T.). This goes beyond thanksgiving ; six times elsewhere the Lord gave thanks, but here He goes a step further ; He praises.

We give thanks for that which God *gives*, we praise Him for what *He is*. Our blessed Lord—ever in communion with the Father—"answered" the pressure around with a note of adoration, perfectly satisfied that all God's actings are in unerring wisdom ; He rested

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in what seemed "good" in His sight. He then invites the labouring and heavy laden to come with their sins and their cares to Him for rest. Burdened with a thousand cares, your heart pressed down by things on every hand, you feel the load is too great for you; but Jesus, the One who said, "Come with your burdened conscience," also says to those laden with cares and sorrow, "Come unto Me; I will introduce you to the Father. The Father who is Lord of heaven and earth cares for you, loves you; relief awaits you; come and lay the burden down at My feet."

Let us look at three occasions in which hearts are relieved of their burden at His feet. Turn to Luke vii. 36-50. This woman may possibly have heard from the lips of Jesus this loving invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Anyhow, she went after Jesus into the home of Simon the Pharisee. What a delight it was to Him to make Himself accessible to that poor, weary heart, and what a load she got rid of, as she stooped at His feet that day; a load of sin, guilt, and wretchedness, which had lain as a heavy burden on her conscience, removed by those words, "Thy sins are forgiven." "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." She reached the One who could make the Father known, she got close to that blessed Person in whom God was revealed, and her heart was at rest, relieved of all the load of sin.

Then in John xi. 32 we find a woman bowing at His feet with a heart burdened with sorrow; she had pressing upon her that which no mere man could remove—the load that was weighing her down was the loss of her brother, the thought that death was upon the one she had loved so well.

Is He sufficient for an emergency like that? Can He relieve that pressure? He can. It matters not whether it is a load of sin or a load of sorrow—a burden that is greater than any human heart can bear alone, He says, "I can give you rest; come unto Me." What cannot the mighty Victor over death accomplish? Come with your sorrows, your trials, your difficulties, He gives rest; and He gives it to all who "come."

Then in John xii. we get an unburdening of a very different kind. It is neither sin nor sorrow, it is a heart presenting its most costly treasure, spending its very best on the Lord's Person. Mary anticipates the day when crowns cast at the feet of Jesus shall testify how worthy He is, as she anoints Him for His burial. Behold her with her box of ointment—very costly—pouring it on His head, then anointing His feet and wiping them with her hair, until the odour of the ointment not only filled the house, but filled the heart of Jesus.

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Disciples might call it "waste" to anoint with such valuable nard the person of Jesus, but He proclaims His satisfaction and delight in her action. He approves with an approval which was not only made known then, but is to be known wherever the gospel is preached.

How all this reminds us that it is no "waste" to spend the best hours of the first day of the week round the person of Jesus, but a very great delight to His heart for us to come burdened with our "basket of firstfruits," and in glad worship, praise, and thanksgiving pour out the treasures we have gathered at His blessed feet. And who so worthy? Would that we knew more of this burden; and the relief of bringing into His sacred presence the great sense of the worth, excellency, and perfection there is in Him.

## Questions on Ephesians.

REPLIES BY J. A. TRENCH.

*To what period does the "dispensation of the fulness of times" refer?*

"The dispensation of the fulness of times" will be the full result of God's ways in government. The object for which the dispensations of time were started on their course will have been attained when "all things," that is, the universe in all its parts, in its widest conception, will be headed up in Christ. The epoch would be at the close of the millennium.

*How can we be said to "have obtained an inheritance"?*

These purposes of God for Christ, when He enters into the whole domain of His glory according to them, include us as co-heirs with Him of the whole extent of it.

*Do the words "praise of His glory" refer to the Father?*

They refer to Him whose will it all is, and which first took effect in those from amongst the Jews who believed in Christ before the day of His manifestation in glory according to Jewish hopes: more blessed than they who will only believe when they see.

*Who are the "we" of verse 12, and the "ye" of verse 13?*

The "we" of verse 12 refers to these "pre-trusters" (if we may coin such a word) among the Jews; they are, in fact, the remnant according to the election of grace. The "ye" of verse 13 would be the Gentile Ephesians who believed in Christ when Paul brought them the word of truth, the glad tidings of accomplished salvation.

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*"Making mention of you in my prayers." Does that set us an example to pray for special gatherings as well as all saints?*

The assembly of God embraced all that were Christ's in each place, yet bound up with all everywhere, even as their love took in no narrower circle (ver. 15, see III. 18). His prayers were for all the saints.

*Why in verse 17 does he address the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ," and in the prayer of chapter III. the "Father"?*

The prayer of chapter I. is more for the intelligence of the wonderful things of God's counsel and purposes communicated to us, and is addressed to the God of Him who is the object of them.

*In what way is God spoken of here as "the Father of glory"?*

As the Author, Source, and Head of all the glory connected with those counsels. The prayer in chapter III. is for communion in the things that have been communicated to us, and is addressed to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*What is the "spirit of wisdom and revelation"? Is it the inner meaning instead of the letter merely?*

The "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" is all characteristic: the Holy Spirit surely as the power of both, but not personally pre-

sented as an object, but in the form of His presence in the mind, for the full knowledge of Him.

*"The knowledge of Him." What knowledge is this?*

I believe it to be the knowledge of Christ, both because of the emphatic place of "Him" and the prayer of chapter III. He was ever the object of God, and to enter into His thoughts we must have Christ thus fully before us.

*How do the eyes of our understanding become enlightened?*

It is "the eyes of the heart [a deeper thing than the understanding] being enlightened," for the intelligence of the subjects of the prayer, by Christ having His full place before the eyes of the heart as the effect of the spirit of wisdom and revelation.

*What is the "hope of His calling"?*

The three subjects of the prayer are the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and the greatness of the power needed to put us into the calling and make us heirs of the inheritance.

*What is the force of "His calling" here?*

The calling is His. All Christians are the called ones, but it is characterized by Him who called them. The elements of His calling have been opened up in

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verses 4-6. The hope of it is the full realization of the wonderful position in the eternal glory.

*How are we to understand "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints"?*

The riches of the glory of His inheritance have been opened out in verses 10-14—all things in heaven and earth headed up in Christ. If His calling is infinitely above us, His inheritance lies out below us beyond the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. It is added "in the saints," because by putting them into possession He formally takes possession of it; just as the land of Canaan was His inheritance (Exod. xv. 17), but which He inherited in Israel; or, as in Daniel vii., the Son of Man comes near to the ancient of days to receive the kingdom (vers. 13, 14), and the saints of the high places take it and possess it (vers. 18, 22).

*Why is power—great and mighty—connected with raising Christ and not with creation of worlds? Also "His own right hand" (ver. 20), is that as a Man?*

It has pleased God so to present the only measure of the power which is to us-ward who believe. Words expressive of the force of it are multiplied that we may be enabled to realize the glorious display of His power, not merely in works of creation that testify of Godhead

power indeed on every hand, but tell nothing of His nature, but now in putting the seal of His glory upon Him, who had revealed Him in all that He is, by raising Him from the dead, and setting Him who had so glorified Him at the highest point of heavenly glory. It is the first action of God in the epistle to bring about the accomplishment of everlasting counsels.

*What principalities and powers are alluded to?*

The principalities and powers of verse 21, as of III. 10, are the highest created intelligences of the heavens.

*This world and another world to follow. What world is it "which is to come"?*

"Not only in this age [not "world"], but also in that which is to come." The coming age is that of the reign of the Lord Jesus in power and glory.

*"Under His feet." Is that in purpose or in fact?*

"Hath put all things under His feet" is a quotation from Psalm viii.—the declaration of God's *purpose* as to the Son of Man. As to *fact*, Hebrews ii., quoting the same passage, says: "But now we see not yet all things put under Him;" and again in I Corinthians xv. 25-27 we have the steps necessary to the full accomplishment of it.

*To be continued in next issue.*

## The Wilderness.

(W. MAGOWAN).

NUMBERS XIX. 1-19; 2 PETER I. 5-12.

CONTRASTS and comparisons, similarities and differences exist between Israel and Christians. In some respects they are alike, whilst in others there are striking contrasts. Israel came out of Egypt, passed through a wilderness, and reached Canaan. We have come out of Egypt, are passing through a desert, and have reached Canaan. But there is this difference: they could only be in one place at a time; whilst in the wilderness they were not in Canaan. Now we can be in the wilderness and Canaan at the same moment, for Canaan does not represent the heaven of the future, but the heavenlies where we are seated in Christ.

A Christian finds the wilderness all round, but he is privileged to soar into the heavenlies and reach the land of God's purpose in the enjoyment of his soul. In a certain sense a Christian is also able to anticipate the world to come, just as Israel did in their song on the banks of the Red Sea, when they said the Lord shall reign for ever and ever.

In the wilderness sin is all around us. Everything tells us we are passing through a place that is spiritually dead; in going through it we are liable to come into contact with sin and get defiled. With Israel there was

a provision made for defilement. A red heifer, without spot or blemish and upon which never came yoke, was burned to ashes. A striking picture of Jesus—no spot outside—no blemish inside—no restless will. Into the burning were cast cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet. The cedar is like man in his greatness, whilst hyssop sets forth his littleness. Solomon, you will remember, speaks of the "cedars which grew on Lebanon," and the hyssop "that springeth from the wall." Scarlet typifies the glory of the world. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14).

The heifer was burnt to ashes. Ashes are the proof that fire has done its work. If you see ashes you think of fire, but of a fire that is over. The ashes of the heifer signify the death of our Lord Jesus Christ under the judgment of God for our sins. These ashes were placed in a vessel and mingled with running water. We may compare the vessel to the Word of God, the running water to the Holy Ghost, and the ashes to the death of Christ. This water was to be sprinkled on any who became defiled. If we touch defilement in any shape or form, we

must be cleansed by the water of purification which flowed from the side of our dead Saviour, applied by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

Now note this water was sprinkled on the third day and upon the seventh if not sprinkled on both days the person was not clean. The third day is the solemn judgment of ourselves as well as the confession of our sin. This is in view of restoration to communion. It is a bitter thing to sin against light and love.

After the Lord had risen He appeared to Peter secretly; that I think represents the third day. He assured him of His unchanged love in that message: "Go tell My disciples and Peter." This message was followed by a private interview, answering to the third day; but he was not fully restored then, he had not reached the seventh day. He returned to his old occupation, spent a dark and toilsome night, but caught nothing. Then John caught sight of Jesus on the shore of resurrection; he had a quick eye as well as a quick ear. Love quickens every faculty. If you love the Lord you will be able to hear and recognize Him like John did. When Peter heard John say "It is the Lord" he plunged into the sea to reach Him. There he found everything provided by the blessed Lord—both fire and fish, a furnished table and a gracious invitation to dine. After

dining the Lord said to Peter three times: "Lovest thou Me?" (see John XXI. 15-17). The third time Peter was grieved. He had denied the Lord three times, and this thrice-repeated question probed him to the very quick. He replied: "Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee." He had not a word to say for himself. The seventh day of restoration was reached. That this was so is proved by the Lord committing His sheep and lambs to his care. If you want to show confidence in a man, commit something you value to him. When Peter could not trust himself, then the Lord could trust him with those dearest to Himself: "Feed My lambs," strengthen My sheep, for whom I have shed My blood.

Peter wrote two epistles to strengthen his brethren. What did he say to them? He told them all flesh is grass. If you want to strengthen saints, do not tell them how strong they are, tell them how weak they are, that they have no strength in themselves and only derive strength from the blessed Lord.

We will now look at things that would defile an Israelite on his wilderness journey. He could contract ceremonial defilement both in the field and the tent. A tent was a man's home. Evil may get into homes, creep in unawares; we may allow things which defile even there. This



ought not to be; everything there should be in subjection to Christ.

Defilement may also come from not walking among others with girded loins. "Every open vessel which hath no covering bound upon it" is like an unwatchful Christian. The people in hot countries are extremely careful to cover their drinking-vessels lest insects get into them; so we have to go through the world as covered vessels. It says: "Every *open* vessel." The fact of going through the world with one's ears open to things around may render us unclean. We are to take heed *what we hear*. We have to go through this world with a covering upon our ears (I mean spiritually), so as not to allow things to get into our minds that would defile. This may come through an impure book, infidel reasonings, or a thousand other things.

Next it says: "Whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword," etc. A sword indicates strife and violence. How often Christians who would not strive over other things think it their duty to take part in heated political contests; often losing their time and their tempers.

We are not to take part in conflicts over worldly matters, but to be occupied with the things of God.

Then we read a "bone of a man" will defile. This shows we have to take care lest a very small thing draw us out of com-

munion. Touching a bone of a man was just as bad as touching the dead body of a man. Death is the effect of sin and a dead bone is the effect of death. We want to be apart from death in every form. We belong to the living God and a very little thing will defile and destroy communion.

Then it says, "or a grave." This is corruption of a worse nature. How easy to travel from bad to worse, from an uncovered vessel to a bone, from a bone to a grave. If we would be covered vessels, we must keep ourselves and not let the wicked one touch us. If we would avoid a dead bone or a grave, we must flee lust and moral corruption of every kind.

In order to do this we must be diligent according to 2 Peter 1. We must learn divine arithmetic, know how both to add and multiply. We must move on, make spiritual progress, go forward like the children of Israel when they entered Canaan. Besides all this, "giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." Virtue I understand is an old English word which means moral courage. After you have believed with your heart you want courage to confess Christ; if you want to get on and be happy in your soul, the first thing to do is to add to your faith virtue. You must have the courage of your convictions and confess your Lord.

The next thing is to "add to your virtue knowledge." How do

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you get knowledge? I do not mean the knowledge of which 1 Corinthians XIII. speaks, which only "puffs up." God does not want us to have that kind of knowledge, but the kind that *builds* up. If a thing is solidly built up it is not easily blown down. We get built up by acquiring the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord. We want to get on our knees before God and ask Him earnestly to let us know Him better.

Then Peter says, add to knowledge "temperance." That does not merely mean that you practise abstinence from intoxicants; it implies abstinence from everything that pertains to the flesh. What we want is to have in our knowledge self-control, in every shape and form. We may control ourselves whilst with Christian people on Sunday, and then let go on Monday and the rest of the week. We must not only be right among Christians, and at home, but be right when mixing with the world in our business.

Then patience follows next. Patience is connected with godliness. It has been truly said, "Faith takes me into God's things, and godliness brings God into my things." There are many people nowadays whose heads are filled with knowledge, but they are not pious. What we need is vital godliness in all our walk and ways. The first Psalm is a good illustration of practical godliness.

Then we are to add to piety "brotherly love." The kind of piety I am to have involves love to my brother; but lest brotherly love should degenerate into preferring some to others, we are to add to brotherly love "LOVE." If you have the Lord of glory before you, if you have in your heart the kind of love God is showing, then all saints will be in our affections, we shall love each other with a pure heart.

Of course, we shall esteem some more highly for their work's sake, but esteem and love are not the same thing.

We are not told to look for love in each other, but to show it. If saints break down in their love to us we must still go on loving them. Divine love looks for no motive to draw out love.

If these things be in you and abound, what do they do? They make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. "But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off." He is short-sighted, his spiritual vision is affected. He cannot see afar off, his faith does not soar away to the glories of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May we know what it is to avoid evil and walk through this defiling world with unsoiled garments, living in spirit in heaven whilst our feet are on the desert sands.

## No. 2.

## The Christian Calling.

(F. B. HOLE).

THE first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians furnishes us with two details of great importance in connection with the Christian calling. First, the position to which we are called. Second, the revelation of God in the light of which the calling is ours.

The *position of sons* is that to which we are called, for evidently the "calling" of verse 18 refers to the "adoption of children," or "sonship" (ver. 5).

This position, however, is ours as called by "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (ver. 3). Further down in the chapter, when making request that we may know the hope of the calling, it is to "*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*," that the Apostle prays (ver. 17).

These sacred names, in their infinite depth of meaning, imprint their own indelible stamp upon our calling. Let us attempt to glean a little of their force.

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." What pen can unfold the wealth of meaning enshrined in this wonderful phrase? It sets before us our Lord Jesus Christ viewed as Man. In His pathway of humiliation upon earth from incarnation to death He preserved always the position proper to man—absolute dependence upon and devotedness to God. God was indeed

*His God*. Psalm xvi. is the inspired forecast of this. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord [Jehovah], *Thou art my Lord*" (ver. 2). "I have set the Lord [Jehovah] always before me" (ver. 8).

In this dependent Man an altogether new relationship as between God and man came to light. God was His Father from all eternity. He was ever the eternal Son, but when He was "made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John i. 14), He became what He was not before, a Man, and as such was saluted as Son. What that relationship involves—the love, the intimacy, the communion of it—is specially unfolded to us in John's Gospel, until in chapter xvii. we find the climax. As we listen to the outpourings from the heart of the Son as Man upon earth into the ear of the Father, we may derive from those incomparable words some idea of what that relationship really means. To Christ as the Word made flesh. God was not only Father, but stood revealed as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another thing, however, was needed if we ruined sinners were to be not merely spectators, but participators of the relationship and its blessedness, in which

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Christ stood as Man. He who was the Revealer of the relationship must go into death and come forth in resurrection. Having risen, His first words are: "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John xx. 17). In those memorable words the Lord Jesus regarded His disciples as "risen with Him" (see Col. ii. 12). The relationship in which He had hitherto stood alone could now be shared with others.

Hence the Apostle Paul lifts up his heart in blessing to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," from whom our calling springs. He does not say, "*Our* God and Father." Christ must ever have the pre-eminence; it is *His* God and Father who is addressed here. *Ours* He is truly, but only ours because *His*. Here is the new relationship in which we now stand. We are called to "sonship." Not sonship of some secondary sort, of some inferior degree, but as expressed in Christ as *Man* risen. As "the Son," the second Person of the ever-blessed Trinity (Heb. i. 2, 8), He, of course, stands absolutely alone.

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ is also known to us as "the Father of glory" (Eph. i. 17). This is something beyond the "God of glory," in which character He appeared to Abra-

ham. If *that* expression indicated "calling," as connected with displayed glory and a heavenly country, *this* indicates that the Christian calling leads to glory specially characterized by the love and relationship belonging to the highest revelation God has made of Himself. He is the Author of that glorious scene, its producing Cause, the Source of all.

"The hope of *His* calling," therefore, is not merely glory, not merely a heavenly country and a heavenly city, as in the case of Abraham, but it is glory for those in relationship with the Father—sonship in its fullest sense will then be known. Our place in glory is as those who are before the Father in association with Christ. All that we shall have we shall have as identified with Him. This is the hope of the calling which comes from "the Father of glory." We may truly sing:—

"Thy wondrous thought has made our  
boast  
Glory with Christ above."

This God is our God. He has called us of His own free grace to share the glory of which He is Source and Spring. In the presence of such grace we may well bow down and worship.

The perfect revelation of God in Christ is, then, the great fact which lies at the very base of the Christian calling; out of it the calling springs; from it its character is taken; for it is in Him we find that to which we are called.

## Abraham's Call.

(A. J. POLLOCK).

WHEN Abraham fully responded to the call of the God of Glory, he became a pilgrim and a worshipper. His tent and his altar declared him to be such. The world of his day was left as it was, out of it he was called to walk in faith.

The call of God involves for us Christians the setting aside of the world system; we are no longer of it; all our moral links are snapped. How far is this true of us practically? Are we in spirit worshippers and as to our associations pilgrims, only wanting what is needful for our bodies, looking to the Lord to supply our needs, hastening through to our home beyond?

We are not anchorites; we are to be rivers of blessing to the world, taking nothing from it, but bringing heavenly streams to it. Abraham was not only blessed himself, but he was to be a blessing—a giver, but not a receiver. We are also called to be givers; but it is only as we are rigidly separate from the world that we can be channels of blessing to those in it. We do not help the world by going into it—this Abraham found when he went into Egypt during the famine; but when he armed his servants and rescued Lot, who had sunk down to the world's level, then he was both blessed and a blessing.

We must be outside the religious world as well as the social and political world. This will involve reproach, but Hebrews speaks of approach before reproach. The one is outside the camp, the other inside the veil; they go together like the blades of a pair of scissors, but we must know one before we can carry out the other. If we are truly in spirit inside the sanctuary we shall be in walk outside the camp.

Notice where Abraham pitched his tent and altar—it was between Bethel and Ai. Bethel means the house of God, and Ai a heap of ruins. This is the place for one who has risen to the call of God.

What interests us in this world? Is it the house of God, the Lord's things? Do we know anything of the profound delight of the Lord in His people? Do we esteem it our highest privilege to get into the Lord's presence—Himself in the midst, where He, as the Leader of the praises, can strike the keynote? All that is linked up with Bethel. Whilst, on the other hand, there is Ai, a heap of ruins. Such is corrupt Christianity. Now what is the good of touching a heap of ruins? You cannot do very much with ruins, and it is a very ruinous thing to have to do with what is corrupt, either in the world or the church. We know the Lord in His faithfulness will

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in the end take every one of those whom He has called and sanctified, and remove from them every bit of worldliness; there is no place for it in heaven.

After this pressure came on Abraham, there was famine in the land, and his faith was tested, as our faith will be tested. It is a very serious thing if we boast that we have suffered this and turned our backs upon that. The Lord always tests us. We then find that mere intelligence in the head and flippancy with the tongue carry us a very short distance. Nothing but real knowledge of the Lord will keep us in times of testing.

Canaan was a land entirely dependent on showers from heaven. Near thereto was Egypt, with its great river, and sluices built from this great river to water the land under cultivation. It was a land that was watered by the foot, a place where things could be managed by man.

Abraham left the land of promise and journeyed where man could bring in his resources to relieve the pressure. Oh, what a voice this has to us! How many of us get tested by isolation, and the lack of social intercourse, no society, and all the rest of it. Perhaps you are in a meeting with little help in the way of gift. Pray for showers. Do not go in for expediency. Pray for heavenly showers.

"Oh," you say, "the saints in

our district are so very slow in going out to saints and sinners, there seems to be nothing moving. How are you going to move those that are so backward?" Only by being moved yourself, drinking in the showers that come from above, being dependent on the Lord Himself. Do not give up, pray more fervently.

When Abraham got down into Egypt he found there were difficulties. The fact is, if we go into this world we shall not be happy. We have too much of Christ to be happy there. Abraham found that through journeying into Egypt he must deny his relationship to his wife Sarah (who was his half-sister). He says, "When you get into Egypt, I may get into difficulty if you do not say you are my sister." This was a lie. It was true upon the surface, but it was a lie in God's sight. If he were married to his half-sister it obliterated the sister relationship. You will find if you go into the world, you will have to resort to expediency. What was the result? Abraham, the man called of God out of all the corruption in the world, found himself in the humiliating position of being reproached by Pharaoh. The world is very keen-sighted. It soon finds out what sort of Christians we are, and it is going to do one of two things. It is either going to *dislike* and *respect* us, or it is going to *dislike* and *despise* us. We may take our

choice; and I think that poor Abraham was disliked and despised when he was bundled out of Egypt by the very man from whom he was seeking favour. Then God began to recover His servant. How gracious of God! Abraham had his back upon the place where his altar and tent had been and his face towards Egypt. Now through grace his back is upon Egypt and he is going back to the place where his tent was at the first. Oh to get right back, if we do backslide, to the spot where the Lord put us in the freshness of our souls at the first.

I do pray that some little sense of our calling and what it involves may fill our souls. We are called

out of this world, and we are journeying to the place that is our home. God has called us by glory and virtue. Oh that we may have our tents and our altars, and be pursuing our way with diligence. Very soon we shall take the last step on the desert sands and be at home. Shall we then regret any whole-heartedness? Shall we regret that in the intelligence of our souls as to our Lord's affections we sought humbly and earnestly to answer to His thoughts about us? No. One smile from His face, and we shall thank Him for the grace that gave us any desire to be like Him, to serve Him, and to be with Him.

*How shall I get through to-day with its sorrows and difficulties, its pain and weariness? How shall I tread to-day's journey without a fall or a spot on my garments? A living Saviour in glory is God's answer.*

*Let us beware of getting occupied with the difficulties; there is ONE up there going before them all, ONE who sees Satan, the world, and myself, and has undertaken to meet all. He can bring us through to-day, as He did yesterday; He goes before to remove difficulties out of the way, or ministers grace to lift us above them. He can and will meet the enemy; let us ever look to Him when attacked; be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

*He can pour the sympathy of His heart into our poor breaking hearts, and both succour and sustain. He is able to keep us from falling, prevent us from soiling our garments. There is nothing He is not capable of doing. He is competent to give us a fresh start onwards and fresh strength; in fact, He is just the One for us to lean upon all through to-day. His grace is all-sufficient, His love unchanging, His power unfailing. Let us count ever and always on Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

*SOON the flesh and man's world will be gone, and gone for ever; Christ's world begin and continue for ever!*

*The Church was left to be a widow until her Lord's return. The widow that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*

## Loved and Accepted.

(T. OLIVER).

THERE is no impetus so powerful from start to finish of our career as the motive power of the love of Christ. The greatest force in the universe to-day is the love of Jesus.

Get hold of the sacred majesty of His person, dwell on the greatness of His love and the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice. Remember that the One who stooped in grace to save is God over all, blessed for ever.

He has taken you up for everlasting blessing and has gone to the right hand of God to carry you along in triumph; He has prepared a home for you in the dwelling-place of God—the Father's house, a throne in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and a portion in the new heaven and new earth, where every trace of sin will be removed and we shall dwell with God through God's eternal day.

Remember too that we already stand in divine favour, and the measure of our acceptance is the measure in which the One who stood in our stead on the cross is now accepted by God at God's right hand. The Spirit of God ever points upwards to Christ and says, "*As He is, where He is—so are we, where we are.*"

What an incentive this should be to us to seek to be *for Him* now, walking as He walked.

Our destiny is to be conformed

to the image of Christ in heavenly glory, having His life and nature, and clothed upon with a body of glory like His own; but we are at the present moment accepted in the Beloved, brought into an ordered relationship with the blessed God, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, children in the family, loved by Christ with a love which passeth knowledge.

Let us get hold of it that all the favour that rests upon Him—as a Man—rests upon us; that glory with Him is our everlasting portion; and then let us seek to walk worthily, labouring like Paul TO BE ACCEPTABLE TO HIM (2 Cor. v. 9).

But if we are to enjoy the love of Christ as we travel on, we must give evil a wide berth. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." The road to soul prosperity and victory in this world is to meditate on God's Word and keep separate from evil every step of the journey.



## Encouragement.

(E. Cross).

WE are nearer being with Christ to-day than we ever were before. Shadows may cross our path, but the darkness brings into greater brilliancy the bright and morning star.

Let us ever remember God is superior to all our circumstances, nothing baffles Him. Sin came into the world, all seemed to pass into the hands of the enemy; but God declares Himself as a Redeemer, and the outcome is that every creature, above and below, will sing His praise in a coming day.

If we dwell on our circumstances we shall soon be downcast, but Christ was not. Why? Because in the midst of adverse circumstances, when despised and rejected of men, from the place of adversity He turned to God; the result being that where darkness reigned light shone out, God turned night into day; and He will be light and help to us if we confide in Him.

In Psalm LXV. praise is silent; it waits upon God, waits for Him to speak. When the earth is as silent as a graveyard He hears prayer; "unto Thee shall all flesh come." In the midst of the darkness and gloom we are to be quiet, leaving the adverse circumstances alone. We have the Lord

to go on with. He "stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves." He is the true "river of God, ever full of water." Are we expecting anything from man, from the church, from our brethren? We must expect only from God; in Him is all our hope. In the midst of all the break-up we are to make known our requests, direct our supplication to God, and that *with thanksgiving*; the result will be that the peace of God will garrison our hearts.

The remnant when Messiah came were, as to their outward circumstances, in a very evil case, yet at that very moment the heavens rang with the voice of the angelic hosts saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men" (N.T.). Why? Because when everything had gone wrong God had His resource; the Son was there, and in Him all wrongs shall be righted and God's glory secured. Israel in palmiest days had never been so well off; in this their darkest hour light had arisen. Simeon's eyes beheld God's salvation; Anna's lips announced the culmination of Israel's hopes.

When that disconsolate company in the upper room at Jerusalem supposed all their hopes were blighted, suddenly through

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the closed doors came into their presence the living One who had been dead, proving by unmistakable signs and ocular demonstration the reality of His manhood. Then breathing on them, He empowered and commissioned them to go into all the world bearing glad tidings to all men.

Afterwards leading them out to Bethany, they beheld Him carried up *in* glory and received *into* glory. Two men in white apparel assured them that He will certainly return in like manner. Joy filled their heart, praise issued from their lips, as they contem-

plated a risen and coming Saviour, a Man in the glory of God.

Where are we looking? Are we occupied with the darkness around, the disrupted church, the failure of brethren, the political chaos, the spread of popery, the lukewarmness of Protestants, all leading on to the man of sin, the beast out of the bottomless pit? Look not earthwards; turn your eyes heavenwards, behold the bright and morning star. Let it be ours to cry, in company with the Spirit and the bride, "Come, Lord Jesus."

## Abundantly.

(R. BLAKEBOROUGH).

THE response to Solomon's prayer, at the dedication of the temple, should lead us both to ask and expect great things from God.

He besought God to look and listen, pleaded that His "eyes" and "ears" might be "attent" to his prayer. During the still hours of the night the answer came, an answer that exceeded all his asking, for the response not only pledged "eyes" and "ears," but added "heart" and "name." "I have heard thy prayer, and . . . now Mine *eyes* shall be open, and Mine *ears* attent unto the prayer made in this place. [Now note the excess.]—For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My *name* may be there for

ever: and Mine eyes and Mine *heart* shall be there perpetually" (see 2 Chron. vii. 12-16).

In addition to His *eyes* and His *ears*, He promises, for their comfort, that His *name* and His *heart* shall be there. What a bountiful God we have! How He delights to exceed all our expectations!

## His EYES.

These run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him. He never withdraws them from the righteous. They are ever and always upon His people. Nothing escapes His gaze. He beholds their every step, and not one of

their sorrows is hidden from Him.

#### HIS EARS.

How Psalm CVII. reminds us that Jehovah's ears are ever open to the faintest cry of the feeblest of His saints. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainting within them, oft at wit's end, suffering for their own folly; yet when in their distress they cried unto the Lord, they found His ear "attent," ever open to their cry. He not only heard, but answered, and delivered them out of all their distresses.

Then how He bent His "ear" in Malachi's day to listen to those speaking together who feared His name. He hearkened and "heard," and though no present deliverance came, yet they were assured that in a coming day they should be numbered among His "jewels." He did not alter the state of things surrounding that godly remnant, but He treasured their words in His book of remembrance. Their condition is analogous to ours; as the day grows darker let us seek to draw nearer to each other; and not only speak to *each other*, but, like Anna (Luke II. 37, 38), speak to *Him* and *of Him* to all that look for redemption.

Then how He listens for our praises as well as our prayers. Thanksgiving should mark us. "Oh that men would praise the Lord!" How often after making

our appeals and finding His ear open to them, we omit the thanksgiving which is His due. Did we mark more attentively His ways of grace and goodness, we should be more constantly found singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord, and giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

#### HIS NAME.

In the days of Solomon God's name was connected with a material house. The place He chose was the rallying-point for faith, not only during the palmy days of Solomon, but in Ezra's and Nehemiah's days, when, after being scattered for *despising His name*, they were once more restored to their temple and their city; for only in the chosen place could they gather, offer sacrifices, worship, and be blessed of Jehovah.

To-day it is not a *place*, but a *name* which is the attractive centre, the gathering-point for His people—the blessed, precious, worthy *name* of our Lord Jesus Christ—during His absence on high. This all-glorious name is available, with all its sufficiency of grace and power, to the twos and threes who make it their one and only centre (Matt. XVIII. 20).

Would that we were increasingly jealous of the honour and glory of that peerless name! What sufficiency there is in it, what supreme blessing for all who gather to it! How cheering

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to those who seek to keep His Word, and not deny His name, in the midst of the ecclesiastical and moral evil of these last days, is the encouraging promise: "I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God . . . and My new name."

### HIS HEART.

How can we rightly or worthily speak of the heart of the Blessed God? The fountain of eternal love, the spring of all our joys, the source of all blessings whether temporal or spiritual. The love of His bosom is the motive power which moves *His eyes* to look upon His people with delight, and makes *His ears* quick to catch their feeblest breathings. With exceeding abundance He has poured out *Mercy* (1 Peter i. 3), *Grace* (Rom. v. 17), *Pardon* (Isa. lv. 7), *Peace* (Ps. xxxvii. 11), *Life* (John x. 10), *Satisfaction* (Ps. xxxvi. 8), and the *Spirit* (Titus iii. 6). All these are showered upon us abundantly ;

and if we think of the future we may, by the grace of God, if faithful to our Lord during the period of His rejection, have, in the day to come, an *abundant* entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter i. 11).

It is ours to know the affections of His bosom, the precious thoughts of *His mind* about us, *eyes* and *ears* and *heart*, with all their divine activities, perpetually. These secure to us all that infinite love can give, and we have *His name* also as our strong tower, refuge, and centre, to which we can ever turn. He has clothed us in garments of salvation, and like the prodigal, invested us with the best robe and made us suitable for the inheritance of the saints in light. In response may our eyes look steadfastly unto Him, our ears be open to hear His voice, and our hearts be constantly true to Him, seeking His interests and guarding the honour of His name.

### Paul's Prayers.

(H. NUNNERLEY).

MOST of Paul's epistles record the fervent breathings of his soul for those to whom he wrote, and if we would learn what a Christian's prayers should be, we shall find it most instructive to note the nature and character of his petitions. He lays down no "form

of prayer"—that is foreign to Christianity—but we shall not go far wrong if our petitions are after his models.

Their scope and variety are immense. At one time he is pleading with true gospel fervour that Israel might be saved ; then

he agonizes that the Gentile converts at Colosse might apprehend the mystery of God; then that his beloved Philippians may abound in love; then that the Thessalonians might be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving being duly mingled.

Turn to Colossians 1. What is his first petition for them?

It was that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's

#### WILL,

and this not merely in the letter, but in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. To know and communicate God's will Paul was a chosen vessel, but how well he knew that spiritual depths lay beneath the surface of his inspired letters. The *will* of God is contained in the *Word* of God; the Holy Scriptures are the repository of the truth; but the Holy Spirit who indited them can alone reveal their profound depths, their true spiritual meaning. To get spiritual understanding we are dependent on the Holy Ghost to give us wisdom and understanding.

Wisdom is the right use and proper application of knowledge, the capacity to set each truth in its proper relation to every other part; hence Christ is the "Wisdom of God," for in Him we get the perfect adjustment of everything Godward and manward;

our wisdom is to hold all truth in its relationship to Him.

Let us bend our knees and add our amen to this first desire of Paul for the Colossians.

But what was the great object to be reached in acquiring a knowledge of God's will? Was it as an intellectual attainment? Was it merely for ability to communicate it to others, or in order to be conversant with "points of doctrine"? No. It was that it might form and govern their

#### WALK.

He longed that the Ephesians might "*walk worthy*" of their "*vocation*," that the Thessalonians might walk "*worthy of God*"; but here he prays that the Colossians might "*walk worthy of the Lord*"—whom he himself ever sought to please. Paul desired that they also should be a delight to Him in their walk.

They had received Christ Jesus the *Lord*, they were to *walk* in Him as the fruit and result (chap. II. 6), whatever they did was to be done in that holy name by which they were called. Submission was to mark the wives, love the husbands, obedience the children; single-eyed, hearty obedience the servants (chap. III. 16-25). Whatever the relationship, whether parent or child, husband or wife, master or servant, the Lord and His will were to govern it, in order that they might "*walk worthy of the Lord*."

Nor were they to be satisfied

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with simply carrying out the various duties and responsibilities attaching to these relationships, but they were also to be fruitful in every good

## WORK.

Knowing the *will* of the Lord, their private life being marked by a *walk* worthy of Him, work is to follow.

Do not let us reverse the order. We cannot *work aright* unless we *walk aright*, and we can do neither unless we learn the mind, desire, pleasure, and *will* of the One whom we seek to serve; but, knowing this, we are not to be loiterers in our Lord's vineyard, we are to be fruitful in *every good work*. The widow and fatherless are to be cared for, the sick to be visited, the gospel to be preached at home and abroad, the children to be instructed, the work of the Lord in every department to be carried on, earnestly, persistently, constantly, as the fruit of the Holy Spirit's power in us and the outcome of our desire to answer to our Lord's mind.

But to work, and not to faint, two other things are needed, and for these Paul next prays; these are knowledge and endurance. To *know God* is true Christian increase, real spiritual growth; hence Paul prays that we might advance, make progress in the knowledge of God. Our spiritual stature is measured by our knowledge of divine Persons. "Grow," says Peter, "in

the *knowledge of our Lord* and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter iii. 18). "Grow," says Paul, "*into Him* in all things" (Eph. iv. 15). We are to be ever increasing; each day God our Father, Christ our Lord, should be better known; it is thus we grow and increase spiritually.

Then we need patient endurance: difficulties, oppositions, trials will surely come. What is our resource? *Glorious power*. Strengthened with all might in order to go on patiently and uncomplainingly through the ups and downs of our pathway.

From this prayer we gather we should pray for—

ALL WISDOM,

in order to walk worthy of the Lord to—ALL PLEASING;

also to be strengthened with

ALL MIGHT

unto

ALL PATIENCE.

Surely, if there is one petition we need to utter fervently and continually, it is for "all patience." How much there is to try and test us among our brethren and in the world, but when tempted to retaliate let us remember that none have been so tried and tested (even by those He called "His own") as our Lord; and yet no ungracious word fell from His lips, no vindictive act or deed, but with all patience He went on meek and lowly in heart.

*To be continued.*

## Fellowship.

(J. BOVD).

THE separations which have taken place amongst those professedly gathered in the unity of the body, in the midst of a great baptized profession, are most painful subjects for contemplation.

Unscriptural excommunications, followed by bitterness and persecution by one party against the other, proclaim what spirit it is which actuates those who thus bite and devour each other.

And this among saints, who know the Father and the Son, and who are to love one another as Christ has loved them!

What a testimony to the world! What a denial of the relationships in which believers stand to one another! What a sin against Christ! May we take it to heart! It may not yet be too late to wake up out of the mists and shake ourselves free from this spirit of division. The Lord—*our* Lord—is coming. How shall we meet Him? Fresh from the green pastures, where we have been tending the lambs and sheep which are so dear to His heart—or, like wolves, found rending the flock?

Do not imagine I am advocating peace and unity at the expense of truth. It is that we may be stimulated to hold fast to the truth at all costs I pen these lines. Separation on questions of funda-

mental error as to the person or work of Christ is imperative. A separation called for on such matters admits of no compromise; the Word of the Lord calls for it. Having once separated from systems or persons who deliberately tolerate doctrinal evil or sanction moral obliquity, the break is final; we must never return to such associations.

This point being clearly defined, and we have the authority of the Lord for so doing, we need also to be equally clear that the Word does not warrant division on account of every matter in which brethren cannot see eye to eye.

Separations have taken place amongst those once gathered in the unity of the body: the point before me is, are those separations justified by the Word?

We must first be sure that the contention was as to *the truth*, then we must carefully consider if the matter contended for warranted separation. If after careful and prayerful investigation I now see that the separation was of such a nature that it could not be sanctioned by the Lord, because the doctrine about which wrangling and separation took place was not such as to warrant separation, then my path is simple; I own to the Lord my failure in the

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matter, seek my brethren from whom I have been estranged, that we may get together before the Lord in the confession of our common failure, and seek grace from Him to walk together "in lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv.).

In saying this I have no thought of the *amalgamation of parties*. I could have nothing to do with anything of the kind, because I refuse to belong to any party. If parties amalgamate I am outside them and am untouched by their coming together. Parties are utterly condemned as of the flesh in Scripture, and no saint enlightened by the Word, and walking with God, will have anything to do with them as such. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Most surely it is; let us therefore not make it a symbol of a system.

I emphatically refuse being connected with any party of Christians on earth. I am a member of the body of Christ, but of no other body in the world. My fellow-Christians may view me in certain associations and walking aloof from others, and may designate me as belonging to a certain company of Christians; but for myself I refuse altogether that I belong to a party.

It is my privilege to walk with

all the saints of God who are clear in their associations and personal walk. The Word of God determines who they are. It tells me on the one hand *from whom* to "turn away," on the other *with whom* I am to walk.

If an individual comes whom previously I have refused and now see that there was no scriptural warrant for separation, on what ground can I refuse to associate with him, or he with me, if we are both seeking to walk in truth? Of course I am supposing he is personally pure, and does not come from associations which had an evil origin, nor has drifted into such.

Nothing could be more simple if we are willing to be simple about it. The real hindrance is pride of heart, and the determination of each to justify themselves, and compel every one to acknowledge that *they only* have acted righteously in these matters, whereas when the origin and root is reached it can in many cases be traced to party spirit and prejudice.

If the frequent ignoring of plain statements of Scripture, the pride of heart evinced in clerical assumption, the self-satisfaction manifested in the boasting of leaders, and the sad disregard of divine affection, lately come to light in such an astonishing way, have been used of God to awake any of us to the empty and lifeless ecclesiasticism into which



we were drifting, the disillusionment will not have been in vain.

Let us not stifle the desires begotten by the Spirit of God for the healing of every wound that will yield to the holy and righteous grace administered from the exalted Head of the body, but let us apply the balm as we may have opportunity, and let it be done in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, counting upon Him to bless

our humble efforts to gather His own to Him who is holy and true.

Let us beware of occupation with parties, and the justification of parties, and from gathering to parties, as well as from the amalgamation of parties; but let us all seek to get back again to the living Head, and, as gathered to Himself, let us occupy ourselves with His interests until He come again to receive us to Himself.

### Man's Ruin and God's Resource.

(H. SMITH).

SCRIPTURE clearly shows that the successive tests applied to man, under the varied dealings of God, have all ended in breakdown and failure.

Let us briefly trace some of them.

1. ADAM was set in dominion over all the earth, but from Adam himself God claimed allegiance. The one prohibited tree tested the obedience of the creature. The temptation came, disobedience followed, ending in expulsion from Eden. His progeny were soon marked by lawlessness, violence, and corruption; the flood came and cleared the earth in judgment.

2. NOAH, saved out of the wreck of the old world, was brought into covenant relationship with God, and in his hands the government of the earth was placed. This responsibility is scarcely committed to him before the "drunken

patriarch, and his shameless son, witness their utter inability to govern even themselves."

3. ABRAHAM. As time rolls on, instead of government restraining lust, man is governed by it and very soon idolizes that by which he is governed; idolatry thus becomes rampant. Out of this state of things Abraham is called and becomes the depository of unconditional promise; but meantime he is to walk as a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth, a witness to the separate path of faith, whilst awaiting the fulfilment of the promises. Alas! famine brings failure, Canaan is left for Egypt, and the father of the "just," who "live by faith," asks his wife to deny their relationship, saying, "My soul shall live because of thee."

4. ISRAEL. Four hundred years afterward his seed are found in

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affliction in the land to which he turned aside. Delivered and separated by mighty acts of power, they receive the law at Mount Sinai. Accepting its terms, they take upon themselves its responsibility, saying, "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient" (Exod. xxiv. 7). Moses having ascended into the mount to receive instructions as to various things, both people and priest, left below, set up false worship, saying of the molten calf, "These be thy gods, O Israel," thus breaking the first commandment. As the great principle enunciated in the dispensation of law is *life and blessing on the ground of obedience*, we can see how failure and ruin marked that dispensation at its outset.

5. PRIESTHOOD. A broken law involved distance; the "kingdom of priests" had failed, lost the privilege of drawing near; but God — ever gracious — invested Aaron and his sons with the priestly office to represent them before the Lord, and thus maintain them in relation to Jehovah (Exod. xxviii; cf. i to 29).

No sooner is the priestly office established than the priestly family fail, Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire, and consequently die under the governmental hand of God. Thenceforward Aaron is prohibited from entering "at all times" within the veil.

6. ROYALTY. Two hundred years afterward we find the

priesthood defiled, the sacrifices despised, the tabernacle desecrated; the priest "could not see," and the lamp of God "was going out" — apt symbols of the lack of spiritual discernment and testimony (I Sam. ii. 12, 17, 22). At this juncture Hannah, in her song, announces a coming King who should judge the ends of the earth.

Saul, chosen of the people, broke down and lost the kingdom. David, having subdued the enemies of Israel, conferred the kingdom on Solomon; but lust turned away his heart, idolatry followed, ending in the kingdom being rent in twain, as a judgment from God (see I Kings xi. 9-13).

Henceforth it is one long story of breakdown until, carried captive to Babylon, the regal power is transferred to the Gentile.

7. GENTILE SUPREMACY. Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold set as universal monarch, invested with "power and strength and glory" (Dan. ii. 37, 38), becomes self-centred, ignores God, and claims universal homage. Judgment falls upon him; for seven years, having lost his reason, he consorts with the beasts of the field, eating grass like oxen. Thus royalty in the hands of Jew and Gentile entirely breaks down.

8. THE SPIRIT'S DAY. Thus far we have seen that, in the past, man has completely broken down in his responsibilities. But what

of the present moment—the day of the grace of God in which we live?

The Spirit of God is upon earth witnessing to the exaltation of Christ as a Man; but connected with and consequent upon the exaltation of Christ in heaven, and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, are two great truths.

First. That the gospel is to be preached to every creature, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Second. That believers are united to Christ in glory and to each other on earth, and are to walk together in the truth of the one body of which Christ is the Head.

Have Christians answered to their twofold responsibility—first, as to the gospel testimony, and second, as to the heavenly calling of the church?

As regards the gospel testimony, the twelve apostles received a direct commission to go “into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 46-49). Did they carry out their commission? Did they go into all the world? As another has pointed out, Scripture records no fulfilment of their responsibility, but the exact contrary. When persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem, we read that the believers “were all scattered abroad . . . *except*

*the apostles.*” Thus the men who did not go “everywhere preaching the Word” were the very men who received a direct command to do so. Thus those who were responsible for the proclamation of the gospel break down at the outset, and it has been truly said, “In point of fact the gospel has never been preached in all the world, nor all nations disciplined to this day; but the church which was gathered has departed from the faith of the gospel, and gone away backward, so as to be as bad or worse than the heathen.”

Thus in the beginning failure arose in regard to the proclamation of the gospel and has continued ever since. But what of the church? Has the church remained true to its heavenly calling? Have Christians *walked worthy* of the vocation wherewith they are called, “with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit”? (Eph. iv. 1-3). Have they *walked in love* as Christ also hath loved them?

If we contemplate the present condition of that which bears the name of Christ on earth, can we say it is marked by “lowliness and meekness,” by the endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit,” by “true holiness” and “love,” by “goodness, righteousness, and truth”?

The most superficial view will at once reveal that the professing

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church is at the present moment marked by religious pride instead of lowliness ; by division instead of unity ; by enmity instead of love ; by corruption instead of holiness ; by the will of man instead of the will of the Lord. In a word, the breakdown of the church in responsibility has been as immediate, as absolute, and as fatal as in every other dispensation.

Scripture has plainly forewarned us of this breakdown, tracing its downward history and warning of the overwhelming judgment to which it leads.

Paul, who at Ephesus declared all the counsel of God, warns the bishops that after his decease the wolf from *without* would scatter the sheep, and perverse men would arise from *within*, drawing away disciples after them (Acts XX. 28-30).

If we compare the lovely picture depicted in Acts II. and IV. with the awful condition of pro-

fessing Christendom to-day, we must sorrowfully confess that no failure in past dispensations can be found so serious in results, or so terrible in its final consequences, as the breakdown of the church in responsibility.

Who can deny, as we look at professing Christendom, that the last days have come ? The infidel criticism and utter contempt of Scripture that mark many professed ministers of Christ, their denial of all vital truth as to the Deity, the incarnation, and the atonement of Christ, proclaim that the solemn moment is not far off when Christ will entirely reject that which bears His name on earth. Soon the true saints will be caught up, and mere lifeless profession pass on to its final doom as "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

*To be continued.*

No. 3.

### The Heavenly Calling.

(F. B. HOLE).

THE Epistle to the Hebrews treats of the heavenly calling in a way that would appeal to Jewish minds, and throws it into relief by the continued contrast with their previous earthly calling. It is an epistle of great importance for us to-day, for this reason—

though the great majority of us never were Jews, yet we were brought up under the influence of a popular Christianity largely corrupted by Jewish elements. Many of us, therefore, have had our thoughts of divine things cast in a Jewish mould, and we

need to be emancipated from it and led on to the understanding of our heavenly calling and hopes even as these early Hebrew converts did (see Heb. vi. 1, 2).

The epistle opens with the perfect revelation of God in the Son. The Son is the Apostle, and His apostleship is set forth in the most exalted terms (chap. i.). This revelation lies—as we have seen—at the very base of the Christian calling; but another thing is intimately connected with it. The Son of chapter i. is the Son of Man of chapter ii. He who came out from God has gone in to God. The Apostle is the High Priest, He is also the “Captain of our salvation,” having taken up a heavenly position. He has “passed through the heavens” (R.V., iv. 14), and He is now crowned “with glory and honour” (ii. 7). Further, He is not ashamed to call us brethren, for we are “all of one” with Him (ii. 11). As thus associated with Him in His heavenly position ours is a heavenly calling.

Further on in the epistle we find that “the hope set before us” is connected with that “within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (vi. 18-20). Our hope being heavenly, we have “the holiest” as our present place of privilege in the matter of approach to God (x. 19), and further, in heaven our substance lies (x. 34), and a heavenly city (xi. 10) and a heavenly country (xi. 16),

which by their distant rays lighted up the pilgrim path of patriarchs of old, are now full in view for us—to a heavenly order of things have we come (xii. 22-24).

When Peter wrote his first epistle to the same, or at least to similar Jewish converts, he closed by lifting their hearts out of the scene of their sufferings to the heavenly sphere of their calling. “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while” (1 Peter v. 10).

This scripture seems to link itself up very aptly with the close of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There we are bidden to accept the discipline of the divine hand, since we are come not to Mount Sinai, but to Mount Zion and the whole scheme of blessing in connection with it. Here we go a step further and find power to “*suffer a while*” in the fact that we are called to “*His eternal glory*” by the God of all grace.

Note that first word. It is “His eternal glory.” In the millennial day the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The earth shall be full of God’s glory. Many will rejoice in the shining of it. But to walk upon earth in the light of it is one thing, to be called to it so that His glory itself in its own sphere becomes our home, is another. This latter is the Christian’s calling. Eternal

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glory was the prospect which urged on the Apostle Paul through rejection and suffering, and he connected it with a glorified body; "our house, which is from heaven;" a body, that is, as fitted for a heavenly sphere of glory as our present bodies are fitted for life on this earth (2 Cor. IV. 17-v. 2).

The Epistle to the Ephesians adds another detail to this wonderful vista of glory. The question naturally arises: granted that we are called to find our part in the heavenly sphere, what is the part there to which we are called? What is our position? Ephesians I. 3-6 supplies the answer.

Our blessings are spiritual as to their character, heavenly as to the sphere of them, and "in Christ," *i.e.* ours solely by reason of our identification with our great and glorious Representative and Head. They are in keeping with the fact that in an eternity which is past we were designated to a place of infinite blessedness in an eternity to come, "holy and without blame before Him in love." In so saying we do not for one moment deny the present *application* of these words, but we believe that in their full thought they look on, as stated, to an eternity to come.

If we were asked to define what this "heaven" is to which we expect to go, we should reply by quoting those words.

To be "holy and without

blame" is much. To be THAT "before Him" — the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — is more. But to be THAT, and THERE "in love," and that love the love that is proper to the "adoption of children," or "sonship" — the love of this filial relationship which is ours in Christ, and the blessed character of which is only set forth in Him — is most of all. That is heaven indeed.

Sonship and all the love connected with it is ours now, but in its full meaning it looks on — as often said before — to our ultimate place before the Father in glory.

Who can tell out the wealth of blessedness involved in this most precious grace? What pen describe the infinite sweetness of this relationship? Here we reach a point where exposition or explanation fails. In the presence of the Father's love we do not talk, we worship.

"There only to adore,  
My soul its strength may find,  
Its life, its joy, for evermore  
By sight, nor sense, defined."

It was even thus with the Apostle Paul. He lifted his heart in blessing to God (ver. 3), and then fell on his knees in prayer that the hope of this wonderful calling might be known by us all (vers. 15-18).

## The Parenthesis in the Epistle to the Romans.

(M. C. GAHAN).

(CHAPS. IX.-XI.)

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, CHAP. IX.

ABRUPTLY, and with impassioned energy, the Apostle passes on from his analysis of the work of redemption—with all its marvellous blessings and privileges—to the consideration of the position of his own nation in relation to the grace revealed in Christ Jesus. He had previously declared: "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (chap. III. 22, 23).

How was this to be reconciled with Israel's favoured place before God? Paul's inmost being is here moved to its depths, his emotions finding impetuous expression. He could—were such a thing possible—wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh; the promises and privileges vouchsafed to the nation forcing out the distress of the Apostle's heart. In terse and agitated language he reviews their marvellous calling. No other nation had ever received such favours at the hands of Jehovah, the true and only God, for theirs in monopoly was the adoption (Deut. VII. 6; Jer. XXXI. 9), and the glory (Isa. LX., especially vers. 6, 19; LXII. 31-33), and the covenants (Jer. XXXI. 31-33), and the giving of the law (Exod. XX.), and the service of God (Exod. and Lev.), and the promises. The patriarchal fathers were their legitimate boast, while, supreme favour of all, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, *God blessed for ever.*"

But these deep emotions did not imply that the Word of God had taken none effect, for, accepting "Israel" as the distinguishing title of the nation, viewed from its source Abraham, the Apostle could say, "They are not all Israel which are of Israel," implying a favoured line of descent; the proof of his statement resting upon historical facts in the lives of the patriarchs, in that Ishmael was rejected, for whom on the principle of elective grace Isaac was substituted, while later and more remarkable still, with reference to the then unborn children of Isaac, the elective choice of God fell on Jacob, Esau being set aside.

Here, then, the Apostle unveils a principle of infinite importance to his own nation, viz. *that their privileges and prospects as a nation hung absolutely upon the election of God exercised according to His own sovereign will*: "That the purpose of God according to election might stand." By this simple yet profound process of reasoning, the

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Apostle reconciles the "no difference" doctrine of chapter III. 22 with the purposes of God and the blessing of one particular line of descendants from Abraham and Isaac, to whom the promises were made, to the exclusion of others; focussing upon the problem the light of election and sovereign grace, but for which Isaac and Jacob, and so Paul's nation, must have been barred, by the law of hereditary descent, from blessing.

Is then selection by election unjustifiable? "Is unrighteousness with God? God forbid;" for election is out of a world of righteously convicted and condemned sinners. The sovereign exercise of saving grace is legitimately claimed by Him before whom the world stands *condemned*, and who reserves to Himself title alone to show mercy and to have compassion: "For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy *on whom* I will have mercy, and I will have compassion *on whom* I will have compassion." This secured the salvation of Israel, and distinguished them, on the principle of sovereign grace, from the guilty Egyptians. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

However man may rage and protest, right and title rest with God to do what is according to His sovereign will, by virtue of creatorial power.

In Pharaoh's case Jehovah claims the right *to leave* the guilty to the consequences of their own deliberate and determined defiance of His clearly pronounced requirements. It must also be taken into account too that the divine hardening, beyond recovery, of Pharaoh's heart was actually *consequent* upon his deliberate hardening of his own heart (Exod. VIII. 32; IX. 7, 12). Pharaoh became thus an illustration of a vessel of wrath "endured *with much longsuffering*," but "fitted" (by a self-hardening process) to destruction, in contrast to "vessels of mercy," which were afore "prepared unto glory." That is, judgment was the direct fruit of resolute self-will; mercy of active grace. "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

But Jehovah's communication to Moses (ver. 15) involved the application of the principle of mercy according to sovereign will to Gentiles as well as to Jews, for the word was: "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy," etc. These "vessels of mercy" consequently embrace both Jew and Gentile: "Not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Of this very purpose of God the prophets of old spake; for Hosea introduces to blessing the "not *My* people" and "the not beloved" (Hosea II. 23), together with those temporarily refused the privileged place of the people of God,



who should yet be called "the children of God," *i.e.* Israel (Hosea 1. 10). Again Isaiah speaks of a remnant of Israel to be saved (chap. x. 22), and of "a seed" left by the Lord of Sabaoth, in contrast to the sweeping judgment and universal destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (chap. 1. 9).

What shall we say, then? That is, in view of facts as to Gentile acceptance and Jewish rejection of God's attitude of mercy, on what principle is this different treatment to be accounted for? The difference lay between the two great principles of faith and law. The Gentiles on the principle of faith attained to righteousness, "even righteousness which is of faith." Israel, on the contrary, pursuing the law of righteousness (*i.e.* legal righteousness), hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not (*i.e.* righteousness) by faith.

But the Messiah having come, *His person* became immediately faith's touchstone and object. For the prophet had said, "Whosoever, Jew or Gentile, believeth on *Him* shall not be ashamed." At that stumbling-stone and rock of offence, laid in Zion, viz. Jehovah in incarnation, the Jews stumbled in unbelief nationally.

Summarizing, then, what has been considered in detail above, after recording Paul's heart sorrows concerning his nation, and the high privileges to which they, alone of all the nations of the earth, had been called, this chapter has apparently for its subject-matter the SOVEREIGNTY of God, in the exercise of electing grace, or righteous rejection or judgment, historically illustrated in the cases of Isaac and Jacob, of Ishmael and Esau; established on the ground of absolute right and title to Moses; prophetically announced by Hosea and Isaiah. The Apostle further emphasizes, as far as the individual application is concerned, the two great alternative principles of faith and law in view of righteousness before God, put to the test by incarnation, with the consequences issuing from each.

*To be continued.*

*Paul could say: "The Son of God, who loved and gave Himself for me, is now in glory, and I am longing to be conformed to His image; pressing on until I reach Him, and apprehend all that He has before His mind in taking hold of me; all the wealth of blessing in His heart for me."*

*He calls upon us to follow Him in this path; to press ever forward, with our gaze fixed on that same Jesus who had once shone before his eyes, and still shone before his faith, until we find ourselves with Christ in His likeness in heavenly glory.*

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## Jottings.

(J. TARVER).

WE are to rejoice in the Lord in the day of weakness and adversity (see Isa. XLI. 16; Hab. III. 18). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the *peace* of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your *hearts* and *minds* through Christ Jesus" (Phil. IV. 6, 7).

O love surpassing comprehending,  
Sweet peace both heart and soul  
defending,  
I thee would hail

A wondrous guest  
In tent so frail  
As my weak breast,  
Each care and dread by prayer  
removing,  
God's presence and His peace still  
proving.

"To know the love of Christ,  
which passeth knowledge" (Eph.  
III. 19).

Lord Jesus, let Thy wondrous loving  
This poor, weak heart be ever moving.  
Sweet love of Christ  
With peace of God  
Divinely spliced  
For desert road,  
May they be ours in joy transcending  
Till earthly path shall gain its ending.

## A Woman of Worth.

(J. GRAY).

"*Who can find a woman of worth?*" (N.T.) Solomon asks in Proverbs XXXI. 10. He then describes her qualities, but nowhere in the Old Testament can we find one who answers to the description. Can we find her in the New? Does the assembly, the bride, the Lamb's wife?

"*Her price is far above rubies.*" Was she not so precious in the eyes of our Lord Jesus that He saw in her the pearl of *great price*, and in order to possess her sold all He had?

How this tells us what the church is to Christ; what worth, what beauty, He saw in her. On His side there is no failure. What

shall we say as we compare what *she ought to have been to her Lord* with what she is and has been?

"*The heart of her husband confideth in her*" (ver. 11). Christ has entrusted the assembly with all the secrets of the Father's bosom, made known divine purposes and counsels, and committed to her the sacred mystery of His person, the full revelation of His will. She is the steward of the mysteries of God, the pillar and support of the truth.

"*He shall have no lack of spoil*" (ver. 11). She is the chosen vessel to uphold His interests, the channel of communication between Him and a perish-

ing world. Her business is to carry His salvation to all men, so that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied with spoil taken from the enemy.

*"She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life."* She is ever ministering to His pleasure. Intent on upholding the glory of His person and the greatness of His work she will not traduce His character, nor permit a stain on His name. She will maintain the reality of His Deity and the perfection of His manhood.

*"She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands."* Invested by sovereign grace with divine righteousness—the best robe—she seeks that which, like wool, ministers to the comfort of the household. She also clothes them with flax, the fine linen of practical righteousness.

*"Meat for her household and provision for her maidens"* is found in the living and written Word. During the night of her Lord's absence she arises, and out of her store of "things new and old" ministers by joints and bands, bringing "her food from afar"—those heavenly supplies variously described as the "old corn of the land," the "bread which came down from heaven," the "tree of life," with its ever-new fruits—the goodly products of the heavenly Canaan: "strong meat for those of full age;" nor does she neglect the pure milk of the Word for

babes, so that they may grow up to salvation.

*"She considereth a field, and acquireth it."* Ever having the interests of her Lord at heart, knowing that the field—the world—is what He died to purchase, she uses her energy to acquire what He has bought; her desire (as His) being that all men should be saved; that the "purchased" be numbered among the "redeemed."

*"She girdeth her loins with strength, and maketh strong her arms."* Braced up with the girdle of truth, her loins are strengthened, and with uplifted hands she supports and upholds all saints. Praying with all prayer, she ever seeks to lift up the hands that are hanging down and strengthen the feeble knees.

*"She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night."* Impressed with the importance of her work, she is unremitting in her labour. During the night of her Lord's absence she shines for Him, lets her light appear before men.

*"She stretcheth out her hand to the afflicted, and she reacheth forth her hands to the needy."* The fatherless and widow are visited by her, the sick and afflicted cared for. She goes about doing good, ministering to the suffering, weeping with those that weep. Nor are the poor and needy forgotten; how she stretched forth her hands

in apostolic days, when seven deacons were appointed to look after the poor in Jerusalem!

*"She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with double garments"* (ver. 21). Enveloped with the care of the Father and the Son, in the warmth of their love, her household goes peacefully on amid the bitter blasts and blinding snows of this world. Her inner clothing is the Spirit, who radiates her heart with the love of God, nullifying all external influences, and in these "double garments" of the Spirit, the Father, and the Son she fears not the snow.

*"Her clothing is byssus and purple."* Arrayed as a holy and royal priest, she is invested with what is suited to show forth the virtues of Him who has called her out of darkness into His marvellous light.

*"Her husband is known in the gates."* The gate is the place where the judges sat, so when she is called upon to act for Him, during His absence, she seeks to truly represent Him, doing all in His name. Whether it be the question of circumcision at Antioch, or the excision of an incestuous person at Corinth, she seeks to act with entire reference to Him; gathered to His name, she does all in His name.

*"She maketh body linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles to the merchant."* The white raiment

suited to those who traffic in heavenly merchandise must never be divorced from their testimony. Paul's doctrine and manner of life were in agreement; he practised what he preached, was what he taught; if he exhorted others to put on bowels of mercies and kindness, forbearance and forgiveness, these very qualities marked him. Nor did he forget to wear the girdle of "charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

*"Strength and dignity are her clothing; and she laugheth at the coming day."* Rising up to the greatness of the favour in which she is set, she views herself in all the worth and excellency of her glorious Head; contemplating the height of her calling she regards all that is future in the light of the greatness of the blessing already bestowed. Is she not joint heir to the universe? When her Lord appears in glory, she will be glorified with Him, her "dignity" be apparent to all.

*"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and upon her tongue is the law of kindness."* She is intelligent, she has the mind of Christ. She is prudent, she knows when to speak. She is skilful, she knows how to speak; but her speech is never bitter, resentful, or acrimonious. The law of kindness is on her lips. If her speech is seasoned with salt, it is gracious in its utterance; no harsh or unkind word falls from her lips; even when she is compelled to differ

from others she is not unkind in her utterances.

*"She surveyeth the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."* If one of her household "will not work," neither shall he eat. There are no drones in her hive; every man has his work assigned, and even a Timothy is told to stir up the gift that is in him.

*"Gracefulness is deceitful, and beauty is vain."* The moment the assembly gets occupied with itself as an object, says "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," it is like a beautiful woman self-centred; forgetting that she is only fair through the beauty conferred upon her. Israel incurred the displeasure of her Husband when she trusted in her "own beauty" (Ezek. xvi. 15). The downfall and final rejection of the professing church as God's "mouth" results from self-satisfaction.

*"Give her the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates"* (ver. 31). Hitherto she has been occupied with others,

but the day of her reward has come. Once she planted a vineyard, now she eats the fruit of it. So, in a coming day, work shall be changed for reward, labour for rest, and in the gates in the days of the kingdom she shall reap the recompense of her faithful and devoted service, but this only according to her "own works," for every one shall be rewarded according to his own labour.

We gather from the above traits of a true wife that the assembly is left here to look after Christ's interests during His absence, to prove herself worthy of the confidence of her Lord, ever ministering to His pleasure, wholly absorbed with Himself.

The law of kindness is ever to mark her; being reviled she reviles not again; beauteous as she is, with the beauty with which she is invested, she is not engaged with herself, but her entire concern is for the honour of her Husband, seeking ever to be well pleasing to Him, looking forward to His "Well done" in a coming day.

*Do you know what it is to have before your soul a living Man, in a body of glory, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high? That Man is Jesus, the eternal Son of God, who once hung on the cross between two thieves, the Bearer of the whole of the judgment due to us and our sins. The sin question*

*He settled so completely to the satisfaction of God, that God raised Him from the dead, glorified Him as Man, and sent down the Holy Ghost, not only to give us to know that all God's claims are met and we justified from all things, but to link us with Him in affection and desire where He now is.*

## Questions on Ephesians II.

ANSWERS BY J. A. TRENCH.

*"According to the prince of the power of the air" (ver. 2). Does this expression imply that the unseen spirits are marshalled under the leadership of Satan?*

*"The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Are we to gather from this that Satan acts immediately on men, either personally or through demons under him?*

First be it observed that chapter II. gives us the work of God in time by which He accomplishes the counsels of eternity as revealed in chapter I. Hence it is that in the first three verses we have the state in which the subjects of His work were found, Jew and Gentile alike dead in trespasses and sins; no movement in the heart towards God. This common state of moral death is characterized for the *Gentile* ("ye") by a walk "according to the course ["age" it really is, being the informing spirit] of this world" (*κόσμος*, the world in its wide extension); which is further defined to be "according to the prince ["leader" or "ruler"] of the power of the air." This truly implies a marshalling of unseen spiritual powers under the leadership of Satan, as you say. For he is not only the prince of this world, as in John XII. 31, XIV. 30, but here of the power of the air,

as of the spirit that now works in the disobedient (see also chap. VI. 12). It expresses the universal power and influence of the devil penetrating everywhere like the air, which is the seat of his authority, while he is lord and master of the spirit which rules in the men of the world.

*"The flesh and the mind" are said to have "desires." How would you distinguish them?*

As to the *Jew* ("we" of ver. 3), if demons had not the same sway as in the case of the *Gentile*, "we also all once had our conversation [or "way of life"] in the lusts of our flesh, doing what the flesh and the thoughts willed to do," as it really is. Thus the flesh and the mind are morally identified, though capable of being distinguished; the one the grosser tendencies, the other the more refined and intellectual form of self-will. "And were by nature children of wrath even as the rest."

*"Mercy" and "love" are expressed in God's actings toward us (ver. 4), and later "grace." What is the different thought connected with each?*

That God is rich in mercy in the operations of His power, affecting such as have been described in verses 1-3, would naturally be the first thought. To those who are by nature worthy of

wrath God acts according to His own nature, rich in mercy. But then the heart rises higher to His great love wherewith He loved us, "even when we were dead in sins." It is the absolute source of His intervening in our behalf. Grace is but the activity of that love, by which we are saved. Compared with mercy, grace refers more to the source, mercy to the state of the person who is its object. Mercy contemplates some need in one: it is great in the greatness of the need, as grace is in the thought of the person exercising it, as another has said.

*"Quickened together with Christ" (ver. 5). Does the word together express our association with Him when He was quickened? or does it refer to Jew and Gentile being quickened together?*

Both thoughts are expressed in verses 5, 6. "Together" involves those of both Jew and Gentile in the three expressions "quickened together," "raised together," and "made to sit together." Then there is the association and identification—"with Christ" in the life with which we have been quickened together in the first case; "in Christ" in the last, for we are not yet seated *with* Him. The "together" involves union as well, which is, as we know, by the Holy Ghost.

*Does the change from "with" to "in," in these two verses, imply that quickening has already taken place as regards every true be-*

*liever, whereas it is only in Christ we are raised and seated?*

It is not only the change in the prepositions that distinguishes the actual work wrought in the soul with the revealed position of the believer in this passage; it is marked off by the parenthetical statement "by grace ye are saved," at end of verse 5. The fact that the believer has been quickened together with Christ, in the life with which He was raised from the dead, is looked at apart as the effectual work of grace in the soul, involving the reception of the glad tidings of our salvation and of the Holy Ghost. Life is thus presented from the point of view of the full Christian position, embracing the thought of the union in that life of all who are Christ's, whether Jew or Gentile; while verse 6 is their position revealed to faith as raised together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, though not yet brought about by divine power. It is the position of Christ Himself. Note that the passage does not present our being quickened by the Son as by the Father, as in John v. The words "hath He quickened" have no place in verse 1. What is before us is, that out of the scene of death, where the Lord of life and glory came in grace for us, and we were wholly dead in sins, where no moral leaf of life stirred in the whole creation, we have been

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quickened together with Christ by the power of God that raised Him from the dead; and this involves all His own place, as the One to whom we are united.

*The coming ages are described as being marked by "kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Does this imply that throughout all eternity we shall experience some fresh as well as constant display of kindness?*

God has His blessed purposes in all this for His own glory. First, that which is future and to all eternity; as I doubt not that "the ages to come" are in contrast to time, as you take it. He will be able to show in us how far His grace could go, in the surpassing riches of it, in kindness shown us in Christ Jesus (for it is still the characteristic "in" of the epistle). I do not see that this last expression refers to future displays of kindness, but to the fullness of it that has been characteristic of the wonderful operation of His power in taking us out of death in sins to set us in the whole place of the risen

Christ before Him, and as united to Christ in that place.

*Why is it "riches of His grace" verse 7, and "glory of His grace" in chapter 1. 6?*

Because of the difference between meeting us in our need and what He counselled for the satisfaction of His own heart in eternity, which is the subject of chapter 1. When redemption and the forgiveness of our sins were in view in chapter 1. 7, it was the "riches of His grace," as here.

*What is the force of "we are His workmanship" (ver. 10).*

This brings us to what God counts upon as the fruit of His work in time. The Christian is the result of a new work of God in a new creation, "created" not in Adam or having anything to do with Genesis 1. 11, with which it is often confounded, but "in Christ Jesus," that we may glorify God now, in walking in the good works that flow from the wonderful place we have been set in, as the epistle from chapter iv. opens them out to us. The path is as fully the fruit of His counsel as the place upon which it depends.

*To know what God is to and for His people is the true secret of power and their strength to act.*

*Ezra and Nehemiah not only in heart, but in practice, returned to the position to which God had called their nation. Outwardly deprived of human help, scorned and hated, they unhesitatingly and confidently got back to God's centre. Failure in Israel had*

*not altered that; their inability to present as great and powerful a front to the world deterred them not. Let us remember this and hold fast what we have received, keeping Christ's word, not denying His name.*

*We are called to worship the Father. Let us take care the love of the world does not deprive Him of that which He seeks from us.*



## They Worshipped Him.

(DR. WOLSTON)

*'But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.*

*And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.*

*He said, Bring them hither to me.*

*And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

*And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.*

*And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.*

*And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.*

*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.*

THE chapter I have read brings out the lovely features of Christ, as He passed through the scene where you and I have to walk. You will see how at the close of this chapter there is developed that which I believe He looks for above everything else, namely, that appreciation of Himself which leads to worship. The first worship meeting in the New Testament was in a stable (II. 11). The next in a boat at the end of a dark night (XIV. 33). The first was the homage due to Him as King, this as the Son of God.

We have what led up to it brought before us from verse 16. John's disciples learned the great tenderness—the deep sympathy of the heart of Christ in their sorrow. If we turn to the sixth of Mark, where the same incident is recorded, you will find in verse 29 that these disciples when their master was dead took up his corpse and laid it in a tomb. There is no mention there of their coming and telling Jesus, but we read the apostles gathered themselves together and told Him all things they had done, and taught. That is to say, at the very same moment, down two separate roads, but coming to the same blessed Person, were two very different companies. Down one road came a company of dejected, disappointed disciples, who were heart-broken because all their hopes were shattered; they had lost the one whom they had followed and on whom they had leaned. You can understand their feelings as they came and told Jesus.

If you are in sorrow, in trouble, in difficulty, imitate them. They went and told Jesus. There is pressure, sorrow, and trouble all round, and you cannot escape it—you cannot be in a world like this and escape it. If you have escaped it up to now, it will come. What are you going to do? When it comes, and your heart is broken, just go and tell Jesus, tell Him the smallest thing as well as the greatest.

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*But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves : for the wind was contrary.*

*And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.*

*And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit ; and they cried out for fear.*

*But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer ; it is I ; be not afraid.*

*And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*

*And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.*

*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid ; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*

*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?*

*And when they were come into the*

At the same moment up come twelve men full of energy and life and vigour, and they come back and tell the Lord " Oh, we have had a splendid time ; even the very devils have been subject to us." They are a company of disciples flushed with victory.

Picture these totally different companies together, one sorrowful and despondent, the other successful and rejoicing. Mark what the Lord said to them : " Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while."

It seems to me that the company of mourners and the company of rejoicers are just taken aside by the blessed Lord at the same moment ; He says, " You come into a desert place with Me." Ah, brethren, it is a great thing to get alone with Him, it is that by which He preserves us.

Are you broken-hearted ? He will comfort you. Are you flushed with success in His service ? Be quiet. He quietens us down, and teaches us that His own company is better than the most brilliant service or success that He could give us. How those broken-hearted mourners learned the grace, the tenderness of Christ, as He took them apart, and they found a desert with Jesus a place of the deepest blessing.

The sympathy of the Lord not only comes out here, but the way He is able to support in sorrow. Hebrews II. says, " He is able to succour ;" Hebrews IV. " He is able to sympathize ;" and Hebrews VII. " He is able to save."

Able to succour ? Yes !

Able to sympathize ? Yes !

Able to save ? Yes ! to the very end.

What the Spirit of God puts in such striking language with regard to His priesthood, we see in all His blessed life down here. I have no doubt He bore in His spirit all the sorrows He took away when He was on earth, thus qualifying Him to be the great and blessed High Priest which by grace your soul and mine know Him to be.

Think of His wonderful compassion. He sees the multitudes and He wants to bless them. Oh,

*ship, the wind  
ceased.*

*Then they that  
were in the ship  
came and wor-  
shipped him, say-  
ing, Of a truth thou  
art the Son of God.*  
MATT. XIV. 16-33.

what a heart He had ; what a tender heart ! I do not doubt God has told us of this incident to encourage us and stimulate us, as well as to rebuke us. He has compassion on this huge company ; He healed their sick ; and when it was towards evening the disciples come, and the suggestion they make to the Lord is most appalling. " Send them away." " Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals." It was a most inhuman proposal. Think of it. Five thousand men, and I suppose three times as many women and children, and the disciples say, " Let them go and get food for themselves," forgetting they might die whilst in search of it. " Ah," says Christ, " give ye them to eat."

Are there hunger and misery round about, brethren ? The Lord's word is, " Give ye them to eat." " Oh, but I have nothing." Quite true. That is exactly what they said here. " We have here but five loaves and two fishes." What did that mean ? They left the Lord out. " Oh," but you say, " we would not do that." No, I do not think you would in words, but sometimes practically we do leave Him out ; we do not count on our resources in Him.

They bring the five loaves and the two fishes to Him, and although they had been so callous, how blessed it is to see the gracious way of the Lord with them. He took them into partnership in this happy work of meeting the need of this hungry multitude. This He does as Israel's Shepherd leading them in green pastures. He makes them sit down on the grass in ranks by fifties and hundreds. Why was that ? In order that nobody might be passed over. Everybody got attended to. The twelve minister to their need, the five loaves and two fishes grow as they are carried round, and the multitude were all fed, their need met, each blessed.

We have displayed here love, sympathy, compassion, and power, as He makes those five small loaves feed that empty multitude. The disciples meanwhile are told to cross the lake whilst He dismisses them in His own inimitable way. I have no doubt He did this to rebuke them. They had been saying, The multitudes must go and get on as best they can. Now the Lord says, " Go, get aboard the ship, and look after yourselves." That is what they deserved, I need not say. If He left us in the lurch, it is what we deserve oftentimes. But though they were alone on the storm-tossed lake, He had them in His thoughts. He went on high to pray, spending the night in intercession.

*To be continued.*

# Our Calling.

## THE FIRST ADVENT.

THE MORNING BREAKS, the heavens are opened, the dreary wastes of Israel revisited. As in the twinkling of an eye all this takes place. No special harbingers, no marvellous notices of the coming change. The priest is at the accustomed altar, and the people in their places according to the manner and in the ordinary current of everyday life; when suddenly visitations are made alike to the temple and the cottage, to the priest and the poor unknown virgin of Nazareth.

The suddenness and the brilliancy of all this is very blessed. How it tells us that the distance of heaven from earth is nothing when the due season comes for bringing them into communion. The ladder is a short one that will reach from heaven to earth by and by.

We get a sight of it for a moment in Luke II., a sample of some of its happy services. Here the angels of God are ascending and descending. Gabriel enters without wrong into the place of the priests, and stands even at the right-hand side of the altar. He does not take the high style of the angel-Jehovah, and ascend in its flame; nor does he, like Jesus-Jehovah, speak of him-

self as greater than the temple; but, being a heavenly one, he enters without *trespass* upon the place of the priest, as he also enters without *reluctance* into the place of the poor unknown Nazarene.

The earth may not be so prepared to receive such visitations as heaven is to make them, but Gabriel has for both Zachariah and Mary the same healing and gladdening word "fear not." And joy, the most satisfying joy, diffuses itself everywhere: old men and maidens, young men and children, join in the millennial dance; Mary, Elizabeth, and Zachariah in their several ways attest their joy; and in principle all creation is lifted up in gladness.

Here is more than earlier days had known, or voices of prophets foretold. Ezra and Nehemiah had never had such days of heaven upon earth as these, nor had Malachi told the remnant of such tastes of soul-satisfying joy as Elizabeth had when she saluted Mary, and as Mary had when she uttered her song of praise.

And the suddenness, as well as the brilliancy of all this! Who was calculating on a bit of all this the day before?

## They Worshipped Him.

(DR. WOLSTON).

MATT. XIV. 22-33.

THE Lord Jesus constrained the disciples to go into a ship to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. I should like to have been there and seen Him dismiss them.

Ah, those disciples—so like us—if they had had their way, there would have been five thousand witnesses against Christ scattered through the country that night. They would all have said, “We were hungry, and He *could* not, or *would* not, help us a bit.”

The sun was setting when the blessed Lord sent them home bright and happy, full and satisfied, so many witnesses of His compassion and of His power.

We, like the disciples, have to cross the angry waves of trouble and difficulty, want and woe. How blessed to know He thinks of us; He ever liveth to make intercession. We may forget Him, but, blessed be His name, He never forgets us, His priestly care is ever over us.

After interceding on the height He descends and walks on the water to meet them. As they saw Him, not recognizing Him, fear took possession of them; but by and by, in a way they had never seen before, they have brought before their souls the glory of His Person. I think they read Deity in Him as He walked on the water that night, and when He comes near, and they are full of fear and fright, mark what He says: “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

This is what we might call the music of His voice.

Are you in trouble? Are you in difficulty? Are you in distress? Are you under pressure? “Yes,” you say, “I know what that means.” I wonder whether you know what it is to hear His voice saying to you in the midst of your deepest troubles, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.” There is no music like the music of His voice, when He comes near to us in a moment like that. Now this is the Jesus that you and I are to know—full of power, full of cheer, delighting to banish our fear.

Peter now speaks: “Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.” “If it be Thou” I do not think implies doubt, but what was moving in that disciple’s soul was the charm of the company of Christ.

We not only get the music of His voice at a moment when difficulties press, but we are privileged to reach Him, to be found in His company.

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"Come." Ah, the authority of that word on Peter's soul! We find that when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus—a most touching scene. We see that feeble disciple walking on the water. Perhaps somebody says, "Oh, but you know he sank." True, but why point to that? Why do you not draw attention to the wonderful fact that he walked? He walked on water as really as his Master so long as his eye was fixed on Christ. It was divine power, of course, that sustained him there. Whether the water be stormy or whether the water be smooth, neither we nor Peter can surmount the waves unless sustained by divine power. It is as impossible in the trough of the sea as on the crest of the wave.

How could we walk on either? If the water were like a mill-pond, how could we walk on it? We could not. There are no circumstances under which any saint can walk rightly unless he is sustained by the blessed grace of Christ. That is the whole point. "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." Well, out he comes, and you tell me he sank. Yes, he sank; but I will tell you what, he sank so near to Jesus that the Lord had only got to put out His hand to touch him.

Beloved fellow-Christians, set your hearts on getting so near Him that if you are in danger of sinking you will sink within touch of His hand. The Lord lifted him up, He will lift you up.

The next thing is they get back to the land. John's Gospel tells us that the moment they get into the boat they are back to land. This gospel tells us that the moment they got back into the boat they fell down and worshipped Him.

What led them to do that?

They had discovered His sympathy, His compassion, the tenderness of His heart, the glory of His Person, the charm of His company, and the authority of His word, in the way He sustained and upheld the one that looked to Him. The effect on the company was they worshipped Him and said, "Thou art the Son of God."

In the sixteenth chapter Peter confessed Him as the Son of God. The Father revealed the glory of the Son of God to him, but in the fourteenth chapter there were a dozen others who confessed Him *Son of God*, who were bowed in His presence, in the discovery of His worth and beauty and tenderness and grace, and they worshipped Him.

This confession of the glory of His Person flowing from the lips and hearts of those disciples is the first *united* burst of worship to the Son of God we find recorded. Let us seek to perpetuate it.

## Paul's Prayers.

(H. NUNNERLEY).

Two are found in Ephesians—one in I. 16, the other III. 14. The first is addressed to the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second to the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On bowed knees, in deep and fervent supplication, Paul prays that we might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in order that the light and knowledge of that glorious One, who is the sum and substance of all that can be known of God, may be seen with the *eyes of our hearts*; in order that God's calling, and the hope connected therewith, may be known by us; that the glorious inheritance in all its immensity may engage our minds; and that we might be conscious of almighty power to *us-ward*.

The heart is spoken of as having "eyes," for in divine things affection is quicker of perception than intellect. Mary in John XII. shows how the Spirit of wisdom and revelation unfolds divine truths to very simple minds, where true love exists. This hidden wisdom should be greatly desired by each one; it is the spiritual condition needed to grasp the "hope" of our calling.

That calling is from above, and links us with the Father and the

Father's house; it tells us we are to be eternally in known, conscious, enjoyed sonship. We wait in "hope" for its full and perfect accomplishment, when, in glorified bodies after the image of the Firstborn, sonship in the full meaning of the term will be ours.

Then the wide expanse of the inheritance which lies beneath is spread out before our souls; all the vast extent of glory given to Christ, and which God will inherit in His people. The almighty power, already displayed in raising and exalting Christ, will operate to bring it all about.

What is the burden of our prayers? Have *we* ever poured like petitions in God's ear? Have we sought a full and perfect knowledge of Himself?

Do we know that we are called to a home, before we share a throne, to a scene of inexpressible delight, in the family circle of the Father's house, sons before His face, in the very image of the Firstborn? Have we viewed anticipatively that gathering up of all things in Christ, as Head and Heir, and entered into the wonderful fact that God will possess this glorious inheritance in His redeemed?

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Have we grasped the fact that almighty power is to us-ward? If not, shall we bow our knees *now*, and set our "Amen" to these four petitions, and not rest satisfied until our souls enter into them, until the *hope* fills our hearts, and the riches of the glory of the inheritance occupy our minds, and the power which shall bring it all about is grasped, and we possess the full knowledge of Himself the Centre and Sum of all; for this is "the deepest, sweetest character of the revelation," that the Person is known as well as the circle of blessing, in full conscious apprehension under the gracious teaching of the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge.

In chapter III. Paul's knees are again bowed; he now addresses the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ. His attitude witnesses to his earnestness; he supplicates that saints might not only know the extent of their blessing, but that they might know the Blessed One, their affection centred on, engaged with Him. The Spirit, come from the Father, strengthens the inner man with power to this end.

Power belongs to God, the Holy Ghost is God; He dwells in us, hence we have power. What for? To draw out our affections, enshrine Christ in our hearts, make a dwelling-place for Him. As faith appropriates Him, by the

Spirit's power, He finds an abiding home, is not a mere fitful visitor. Rooted and grounded in love, we are to draw our supplies from God's storehouse, and enter into all the length, breadth, depth, and height of divine counsels, view God's ways in Christ—a breadth which includes all revelation, a length reaching from a past to a coming eternity, a depth that went below everything when Christ descended, a height to which He has gone—the "glory's highest height."

Paul does not stop here—we are to seek to know what is unknowable, measure what is immeasurable, descend to fathomless depths, soar to unreachable heights, for who can comprehend the *love of Christ*? It passeth knowledge, it is an ocean without a shore. We may dip our little vessels in it; though we cannot hold the ocean, it holds us; we are "filled up in all the fulness of God." The fulness of God is Christ, in Him dwells all the fulness of Godhead bodily, and we are filled up in Him.

He is the centre of all glory; and "He who fills all things with His glory fills the heart with a love more powerful than all the glory of which He is the centre." "God strengthens us, according to the riches of the glory that He displays before our eyes, as rightly belonging to Christ; He dwells in us in tenderest affection, and He is the strength of our heart."



## Restoration.

(R. K. WILSON).

RESTORATION has a twofold aspect. In Psalm XXIII. it has more the force of renewal—the inward man is renewed day by day; lying down in green pastures, beside waters of quietness, they minister their restoring and healing virtues. Christ nourishes, the Head invigorates and replenishes; the soul is restored.

In Psalm LI. restoration bears another character, it is the restoration of a sin-burdened conscience to the joy of God's salvation. This is effected by confession. David had travelled very far on the downward path; Nathan came with a word from God. Convicted by it, full of contrition, David confessed his sin. Washed with the water of the Word, he goes to the very root; not only owned what he had *done*, but, in deep self-abasement, confessed what he *was*, the iniquity in which he was shapen, the root evil of his nature. He had to learn *himself* by his fall. If restoration is to be deep, real, abiding, the *cause* as well as *effect* must be reached. Self as well as sins must be judged.

It has been said that God's people have derived more comfort from Jacob and David, than from Joseph and Daniel. Their failures and their restoration,

whilst showing up the flesh on their side, only bring into fuller view the grace and goodness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, on God's side.

What suits God is the sacrifice of a broken spirit: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." Sin in a saint is more heinous than sin in a sinner, but repentance and confession is the doorway of blessing to both.

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep" will be the language of Israel in a coming day. Psalms CXX. to CXXXIV. give us the steps leading to it; they cry unto the Lord in their distress in the first of these songs of degrees; in the last they lift up their hands in the sanctuary and bless the Lord as the fruit of His restoring grace.

Israel's history illustrates recovery and restoration. Hosea tells us that Judah and Ephraim will say: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." They do not *blame others*, or *excuse themselves*, but they take with them words, and say, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." What is the divine answer? "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely."

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They are received, forgiven, raised up, and "live in His sight" in all the fragrance, freshness, and reviving of God's recovering grace.

"The backslider *in heart* shall be filled with his own ways." We have to watch the beginning of evil. If the inner is wanting, faith—love—hope—the fortress of the heart surrendered, the affections drawn away, the outward and visible—labour and works—may remain for a time, but outward failure will soon follow inward declension. Ephesus left her first love; Israel left the love of "espousals"—the fresh, full, spontaneous outgoings of early affection faded and grew dim. For a time nothing outward manifested declension, but Israel ended with captivity in Babylon, and the church married to the world will culminate in final rejection, being spued out of Christ's mouth.

Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Beware of inward departure of heart from God. If you have wandered there is a way of escape. "Repent," "confess," humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. The church has failed; there is no corporate restoration promised, but there is individual restoration to repentant saints.

Have *you* an "ear"? Remember how *thou* hast received and *heard*, hold fast and *repent*.

An *individual saint*, keeping his garments clean, may know and enjoy the love of the Father and of the Son as much in this the darkest, as in the brightest day of the church's history. If the day-dawn radiates the heart, the bright and morning Star fills the vision, the coming Bridegroom engages the affections, all will be well.

Is the reader a backslider in *heart*? Remember Peter. He fell, but he was restored. The *look* of Jesus, the *word* of the Lord, the *intercession* of Christ, began the work, a private and a public interview completed it; the root of departure was reached, Peter was restored, and forthwith commissioned to strengthen others, feed the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ. WHAT GRACE!

If we are consciously reposing in the shepherd-care of the good, great, and chief Shepherd, feeding in the green pastures, drinking of the still waters, walking in the paths of righteousness, with head anointed and cup overflowing, knowing soul restoration as we traverse the valley of death, we need never taste the anguish and sorrow consequent on backsliding, in heart or ways.

There is restoring grace for the conscience through the intercession of our Advocate, but how much better daily to draw upon priestly grace, to feed upon Christ, and thus know soul restoration every moment.

## Espousals.

(F. S. CHAMPION).

2 CORINTHIANS XI. 2.

*"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."*

THIS scripture brings before us our present relationship to Christ. When the marriage day comes the day of espousals will be over, and we shall be publicly united with Him who loves us—that lies in prospect, it is our hope, but for the present moment we are to be in the love and joy of espousals.

Of Israel, Jehovah's earthly people, it is said: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. ii. 2). In Egypt it was a question of safety from judgment; the word of God to them there was: "When I see the blood I will pass over you." There they were in a place of safety, viewed under the eye of God as a justified people. Thus they began their history as the people of God (Exod. xii. 2), but though sheltered from judgment, that did not bring them into conscious realization of relationship to Jehovah. They were still in Egypt, and bond-servants of Pharaoh; what they needed was actual "deliverance." For this they must travel the path of the salvation of God (Exod. xiv. 13–

15), in order to reach "the morning" of redemption, and be free of Egypt and Pharaoh on the other side of the Red Sea. They entered into this when they saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore—"that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and His servant Moses" (Exod. xiv. 30, 31). "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. . . . The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Exod. xv. 1, 2). "Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed: Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation" (Exod. xv. 13). See also Exod. xix. 3–6.

That was the day of their espousals. Then they realized Jehovah was their salvation, and that He would certainly bring them into their promised inheritance, and plant them in the mountain, the place which His hands established. They were then in the joy of a people

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brought to God, to be His peculiar treasure; it was the brightest day of their history.

Now all this is full of instruction for the Christian. The Red Sea typically sets forth the death and resurrection of Christ. He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification (Rom. iv. 25), and as justified by faith we are reckoned righteous before God. We have peace with God, and access into the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. v. 1, 2). Thus we reach "the morning" of our deliverance. The Egyptian darkness of our unconverted days, our captivity (morally) to sin and Satan over, we stand on redemption ground; in the joy of God's salvation we are "brought to God." It is the redeemed and the delivered of whom the Apostle says: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

There was one pearl of great price which the seeker having found, went and sold all that he had and bought it. That seeker is the Lord Jesus Christ; the pearl is the church that He valued and loved and gave Himself for.

There is one company of saints (the saints of this dispensation) who are the gift of the Father to Him, and who are loved with a peculiar and special love. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you" (John xv. 9).

And in the conscious knowledge of this and responding to it we say, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

The Song of Songs, while having primary reference to the earthly bride (Israel) in the coming kingdom day, typically sets forth the affection of the Bridegroom to the church and her responsive love to Him.

The affection described there is both supreme and exclusive. This explains why jealousy is attached to the name of "Jehovah" in relationship to Israel—"The Lord thy God is a jealous God" (Deut. vi. 15). "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exod. xxxiv. 14). He claims all their affections, will tolerate no rival.

This affection when responded to on our side has a great constraining effect. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

The Apostle Peter, although he does not use the term espousals, writes of that which is analogous: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i. 8). He directs us to

Christ, the object of love in whom we have joy unspeakable and full of glory while waiting for His appearing; upon this the Apostle founds the exhortation: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1. 13).

Espousals to a Saviour in glory brings us into a new world, a circle of affection. The Lord is no longer on earth, or known in earthly

associations. He takes a new place outside this world, having by His death ended our history before God as in the flesh, and has brought us into living association with Himself in glory. To say, The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me: this gives a new object, produces a new affection, gives a new motive, so that in responsive appreciation and affection we seek His company, and are not happy or content save as we enjoy it.

### Jude's Warnings.

(E. E. CURTIS).

*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*

. . . . .

*Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.*

. . . . .

THIS epistle not only exposes the evil which has crept into the professing church, but declares its final overthrow in judgment at the revelation of the Lord Jesus, and sets up beacons to warn us away from the rocks of apostasy.

The words "you" (ver. 3), "them" (ver. 11), "some" (ver. 22), and "others" (ver. 23), bring before us four distinct classes. The first is a call to all true Christians to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. The second speaks of apostates who have renounced Christianity, except in outward show; the third refers to those who have come under the baleful influence of such, and are corrupted by them, but have not given up everything; whilst the last, "others," points to those who are desirous of deliverance from the fire, whom we are to "save with fear, hating even the garment spotted with flesh."

The Apostle had taken up his pen to write to them of the common salvation, but he is diverted from this by the need-be to utter a solemn warning against the deadly things creeping in "unawares."

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*And of some have  
compassion, making  
a difference :*

*And others save  
with fear, pulling  
them out of the fire ;  
hating even the gar-  
ment spotted by the  
flesh.*

JUDE 3, 11, 22, 23.

He exhorts them to contend for the faith. "The faith" is not *our faith*, that which we put in a Saviour-God, but it is the revelation of the things we are to believe, the peculiar and special doctrines of Christianity, the sum and substance made known in the New Testament of the mind of God for His people.

This is everywhere assailed to-day. We are warned by certain Old Testament examples of the dangers we are menaced with, and the judgment which awaits those who are ensnared thereby.

Unbelief marked Israel—destruction followed, not one of that vast host reached Canaan, save the two men of faith, Caleb and Joshua. Angels apostatized, left their own habitation, and are reserved in chains awaiting judgment.

Sodom and Gomorrah gave reins to their lusts, and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire in consequence. They are the abiding witnesses that God's judgments are eternal, their cities shall never be rebuilt.

Next we have the "way of Cain," the "error of Balaam," and the "gainsaying of Core." Cain's way is largely trodden to-day ; he set aside the blood, the need for atonement, and approached God with the works of his hands.

Balaam's "way" was greed of gold, for the sake of which he sold himself to work evil. His "error" was, whilst professedly a prophet of God, he was actually in collusion with demons (Joshua XIII. 22). The spiritualists of to-day boast that they number Anglican clergy and Nonconformist ministers among their adherents. Doubtless they do, but this is only a proof of the truth of the epistle ; for Jude tells us such will have crept in, and be found within the circle of Christian profession.

Core was a rebel against God's constituted authority. What followed ? The judgment of God fell on him and two hundred and fifty of his followers. This manifested the real state of the people. Instead of justifying God, they accused Moses and Aaron of killing the Lord's people. As a result nearly fifteen thousand more were swept away by the plague which came out from God. What a warning to us not to let our sympathies go out to the enemies of our Lord !

Such men as Core and Balaam are said to be "clouds without water." Solomon tells us the man who boasts of a false gift is a cloud without water. Then they are said to be "carried about

of winds." Wind here is a symbol of Satan's power—the prince of the power of the air, it is he who directs and controls such men—not the Holy Spirit. From their fallen intellects emanate vain thoughts of man, false thoughts of God; instead of being ministers of heavenly refreshment, they use their false gifts to poison the souls of their fellows.

They are also compared to "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." Have you stood upon some rock-bound coast and watched the waves roll in? Have you seen them dash themselves against the rock and fall back into their ocean-bed a mass of foam? When the Lord asked Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" his reply was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The Lord immediately answered, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." "Upon this rock"—Christ confessed as "the Son of the living God"—"I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Raging waves may dash themselves against that rock, but they simply foam out their own shame. Christ abides in spite of all the power of men dominated by Satan.

Such are "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Every Christian is a fixed star. These wandering stars appear to be luminaries, but we must beware that we are not caught by the false glare of their delusive teachings.

What is our safeguard? The twentieth verse: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Whenever we meet, whenever we come together, we should seek to send each other away spiritually enlarged. "Building up yourselves on your most holy faith." We need to be strengthened for this work of contending for the faith, by the very truths which these corrupters assail; we are to build up ourselves on them. In the Scriptures we find embodied the faith once delivered to the saints.

Nor must we forget prayer! We are to "pray in the Holy Ghost"—ever having the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ nearest our heart.

"Keep yourselves in the love of God." The sun of God's love is ever shining. Whilst we keep in the sunshine we do not feel the chilly blast of this world. We are to keep ourselves in the love of God. There are many places in this world where the Christian cannot enjoy the love of God. The moment you cease to enjoy

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the love of God, see if your associations are the cause ; if so, come out of them, separate yourself, so as to walk in the warm rays of divine love.

“ Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” What is that ? It is the last act of mercy He will ever perform for us. We have need of mercy all along the line ; but the last expression of it is when the Lord calls us upward, and stretches down His hand of power, and, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, places us in the glory of God. “ We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His glorious body.” Are you looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ? If so, any moment you may find yourself in the fulness of eternal life, where you will enjoy all that goes to make up the pleasure of God.

Now let us look at the third class spoken of. “ And of some have compassion, making a difference.” If there are corrupters, there are the corrupted. We must distinguish the deceivers from the deceived. We must make a difference. We must have compassion on those true children of God, who are ignorantly carried away, and seek them out, and endeavour to meet them just where they are with that which will help them to get clear of evil. We must minister Christ to them, this will fortify them against the inroads of this false teaching ; we must direct them to the sure Word of God.

We come now to the last class. “ *Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*” Who are these ? Evidently they are persons whose corruptions are such that the hand stretched out to save them may be tainted with the evil whilst doing so. This may refer to those whose associations are defiling, hence the need of godly fear as to ourselves whilst seeking their deliverance. In self-distrust we are to take hold, pulling them out of the fire, as the angels dragged Lot and his daughters out of Sodom.

Our Lord and Master loves us so much that He will not be satisfied until we are in the glory with Him ; but He has left us here to save others. “ Know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Think of it. If only you were used to the salvation of one soul, when millions of years shall have rolled their course, that one soul that you have saved will be with you in eternal glory ! Yes, “ *others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh,*” not entering into their evil, nor in that Pharisaical “ Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou ”



attitude, but in separation from their evil, making them feel that you love their souls.

If this epistle is a dark picture, it has a charming setting in its opening and closing verses. It opens by telling us that God—our Father—has set us apart, separated us *to*, and *for*, Himself. In the midst of the mass of evil we are “preserved” in Christ Jesus; as no evil can ever touch Him, so, viewed in Him, no evil can touch us. It ends by telling us He lives to keep us from falling, and waits for the exceeding joy of presenting us faultless before the presence of His glory.

What a God is ours! Those whom He calls He preserves; those whom He preserves He presents! No wonder Jude closes with a burst of praise as he contemplates being set before the face of God the Father, in all the joy of the Saviour, who shall then rest in His love, and rejoice with singing over those many sons brought to glory.

Surely our eternal occupation will be to celebrate the worth and glory of the only wise God—our Saviour—and ascribe to Him glory, dominion, majesty, and power, for ever and for ever. Shall we not take up the strain now?

### Priests in Daily Life.

(J. B. STONEY).

WE—all believers—are priests to God, provided by divine grace with a priestly dress as much as with the garment of salvation. Always in the sanctuary as the priests were during the seven days of their consecration, in that sense we are never out of God's presence. Always called to exercise priestly functions, a separated company worshipping by the Spirit of God and rejoicing in Christ Jesus. The Levite, on the other hand, walks before men, ever bearing before the eye of others the Christ in whom He finds his joy in private. The priest's work was inside, the Levite's outside. We are Levites, but we never cease to be priests. If you understand the dignity of your position in the sanctuary, you must maintain it in the world. The atmosphere and circumstances are different, but *you* are not to be different. What you are in the presence of God you are to maintain here; in all the contrariety of *this* world you are to be in correspondence with *that* world. A man must not have two faces, one for Sunday and another for

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Monday. He must not live two lives, and call one secular and the other sacred. Our blessed Lord carried heavenly grace into the workshop, never left heaven whilst carrying out earthly duties.

If you are light in the Lord, the Lord is to light you up, your whole body is to be luminous. Ask a Levite, What is your business here? He would answer, I am wholly engaged about the sanctuary, either bearing a board or a vessel, the ark or the curtain. But you say, Must we have no secular business? Our Lord had one and so had Paul. "These hands ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me." Do you think Paul soiled his conscience by making tents? Do you suppose he was not in spirit engaged in priestly service whilst labouring with his hands? Do you think he was a different man when at work than he was when at worship?

If you say, I am in the highest dignity in the presence of God, you cannot come out and compromise that dignity before men; a truthful person could not do it. You do your work in an element that does not suit you, but you derive your support from an

element that does suit you. Morally you live in heaven whilst actually engaged on earth, in its every-day things. "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." You must start from your true place—a priest in company with the Lord—and maintain that place by separation on earth from all that would soil the conscience, or burden the heart or mind. Remember we are not left in the world to get *on in it*, but to *go through it*. It is an inn—not a home; it is in the joy of heaven, the countenance and favour of your Lord, that you travel on to your everlasting portion.

But you say, My business is such that I cannot serve God in it. Well, come out of it. Here is a promise for you: "Touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a *Father to you*."

Never let us forget that it is utterly inconsistent for a saint to be one thing with God and another with man. He never ceases to be a priest when doing Levitical service. Service now—all service—labour—all labour—must be carried on in the light of the sanctuary. "DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS."

*We are priests. Let us beware lest, like Eli, we have neither the energy nor discernment suited for the place.*

*Let us never surrender any truth God has shown us from His Word.*

*There are inalienable, ever-existing privileges belonging to saints, of which by failure they may lose the enjoyment, but repentance always opens the door to possession.*

## God's Resource.

(H. SMITH).

WE have already traced the ruin of man in the different periods of this world's history. We may now briefly indicate how Christ is the RESOURCE of God in every dispensation.

I. Adam was told to "subdue" and have dominion over the whole earth, but failing in personal subjection to God, he lost his dominion. CHRIST is the last Adam—the Lord out of heaven—who once trod this earth a perfectly subject Man. To Him God will give dominion, not only over the earth, but over all the works of His hand. And He will rule until every enemy is put down, and at last deliver up to God a kingdom in perfect subjection.

II. Government for the restraint of evil was the great principle committed to the responsibility of Noah, who immediately proved his utter incapacity to bear the weight of government. But CHRIST is God's RESOURCE. He is the One of whom we read: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder." The name that He bears displays the character of His government. He shall be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." His government will be characterized by righteousness, power, and peace. What a government will this be, wherein all the wonders of God are displayed, in which divine counsel will be carried out by divine power, acting in divine love, bringing in everlasting peace. No period of depression will ever mar the prosperity of His government: war's horrors will never disturb the peace that He will command. For we read, "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." Being established in judgment and justice, it will be an everlasting kingdom "from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. ix. 6, 7).

III. Promises were made to Abraham, but Abraham failed in responsibility, and the promises were given afresh to his seed—CHRIST—in Him alone is found the answer to every promise. "The Son of God, Jesus Christ . . . was not yea and nay, but in Him was yea." Until Christ came no one had been found who could make them good; to every other God had said, "Nay." But when Christ came, there was One to whom God could say, "Yea."

He trod in perfection the path of faith, fulfilling every responsibility, and could have taken His government and wielded the sceptre; but

how then could Abraham's seed enjoy their promised blessing? In order that Israel might obtain the promises, and Gentiles share in them, He met their broken responsibilities by dying on the cross, and as risen from the dead He is the true Isaac, "all the promises of God in Him are yea and in Him amen." In and through Him the promises will be made good to the redeemed.

IV. Israel was called out of Egypt to receive the law and pass into the promised land. At the outset they broke the law, and completely failed in their after course, with the result that finally the nation passed into captivity, and, instead of being a testimony to God in the world, became the occasion of the name of God being blasphemed among the Gentiles.

But Christ, the true Son—called out of Egypt (Matt. II. 15)—made under law (Gal. IV. 4)—magnified it, made it honourable (Isa. XLII. 21). Passing victoriously through temptation in the wilderness, He was greeted by the kingdom glory on the mount of transfiguration; but turning from the glories of the kingdom, He speaks of His decease, and traverses a downward journey to the cross "to redeem them that were under the law." Consequently Israel will be regathered, the law written in their hearts and God known by them (Heb. VIII.). Thus, in and through Christ, that which Israel failed in maintaining will be perfectly realized to the glory of God.

V. Priesthood and royalty both broke down under man's responsibility. But in CHRIST they will be upheld and displayed for the glory of God and the blessing of man.

God has declared He is "My King," and decreed He shall sit "upon My holy hill of Zion." His throne will be established in righteousness; He will put down every enemy, and will exercise judgment and justice among His people (Ps. II., LXXII.; Heb. I.). But not only will He be King in Israel, but He will take up the broken responsibilities of the universal kingdom committed to the Gentile king, and in His wider title of Son of Man shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth, and of His kingdom there will be no end (Ps. LXXII.).

Moreover, He will sit a Priest upon His throne (Zech. VI.). Called of God, as was Aaron, He will exercise His priesthood after the order of Melchisedec; blessing man on behalf of God, and praising God on behalf of man.

Thus through the exercise of a perfect priesthood the relations between God and man will be perfectly maintained by a King, who will wield absolute power in a universal kingdom that will never pass away (Heb. V.; Ps. CX.; Gen. XIV. 19, 20).

Thus for the failure of every past dispensation God's RESOURCE is Christ—the One who will destroy all the works of the devil, who will meet all the broken responsibilities of man, and who will uphold every divine principle for the glory of God.

But what is true of past dispensations is equally true of this, the church period. As we have seen, no breakdown is so great as the breakdown of the church in responsibility. Here also CHRIST is the perfect resource of God.

The unity which Christ died to secure, and for which He prayed to the Father, and which we have entirely failed to maintain, will at last be brought to pass through Christ Himself.

We have seen from the warning of the Apostle that the first great breakdown of the Christian dispensation would arise among the shepherds of the flock of God (Acts xx. 28-30).

It was so in Israel. The shepherds of Israel were the first to fail in responsibility. There were starving sheep in Israel, and some were weak and sick and broken, and some were driven away and lost. But the shepherds neither fed nor cared for nor sought the sheep, but with hardness and cruelty ruled them. And God's beautiful flock became a prey to the wolf, and wandered upon the desolate mountains, scattered upon all the face of the earth (Ezek. xxxiv. 1-6).

But though the shepherds have utterly failed, God Himself will act on behalf of His sheep. The sheep may be scattered, but still God calls them "My sheep," and He says: Ezekiel xxxiv. 11, "I, even I, will both *search* My sheep, and *seek* them out"; 12, "And will *deliver* them"; 13, "And *gather* them, . . . and will bring *them to their own land*"; 14, "I will *feed* them"; 15, "And I will cause them to *lie down*."

He will search for His scattered sheep and deliver them from bondage. The delivered sheep He will gather into one flock; the gathered flock He will bring to their own country; and in that good land He will feed them and give them everlasting rest. And all this will He do *through Christ*: "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd" (ver. 23).

But Israel's sad history finds its counterpart in Christendom. The shepherds have failed to watch over the flock; grievous wolves have entered in, not sparing the flock; false teachers have arisen, bringing "in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," with the result that the gospel testimony has but feebly gone forth, the heavenly calling of the church is all but ignored, and "in the cloudy and dark day" the saints of God are divided, scat-

tered, and wander in loneliness on the rough mountain places of this poor world with none to "search or seek after them."

But CHRIST is ever the resource of God. Long ago He said, "My sheep hear My voice, and *I know them*, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish." Scattered and divided they may be, but the Shepherd knows them. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." He came long ago to *seek* that which was lost. At the cross He "gave Himself for our sins, that He might *deliver* us from this present evil world," and died to "*gather together* in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

By the divisions of Christendom we have, as far as it is in our power, thwarted the very purpose for which Christ died, dishonoured His name, and wounded His heart of love. But His love never fails, and the very One we have so deeply grieved is our only hope. CHRIST is the resource of God in the ruin of the church. He will bring to pass the unity which we have so utterly failed to maintain. At last His voice of power will call His saints "*together*," for we read: "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up *together* with them." His scattered saints are going to be *together* at last. The enemy, through the failure of the shepherds, has scattered the flock, but the Lord by divine power will gather them together. If through our folly we do not walk together, through His power we "shall be caught up together."

And when at last the Lord brings His own together, there will be no more separation, for we read, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." No more wandering sheep, no more heart-breaking separations, no more Christ-dishonouring divisions. "The former things are passed away." We shall be "together" with one another, and "together" with Him through an endless and blissful eternity.

Letting slip first love, and thus in heart departing from the Lord, brought in all the divisions; but our gathering together to be "*with the Lord*" will for ever end them. His voice will call us together, and He Himself will for ever hold us together.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." If we feel the bitter shame of our breakdown, if we mourn over the desolation of the saints, and above all if we feel the grief and dishonour to the Lord, let us comfort one another with these words:

"TOGETHER . . . SO SHALL WE EVER BE WITH THE LORD."

*Concluded in next issue.*

## THE SALVATION OF GOD.

(M. C. GAIHAN).

(THE PARENTHESIS IN ROMANS IX. TO XI.)

THE fountains of apostolic distress on behalf of the nation so dear to his heart are opened. He exclaims, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be *saved*"; or, more emphatically, "Brethren, the delight of my own heart, and my supplication which I address to God for them, is for SALVATION."

Paul then depicts the national attitude at that moment, viz. "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Ignorance lent impetus to energy in the wrong direction: "They being *ignorant* of God's righteousness, and *going about* to establish their own righteousness, submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God." Their spiritual vision was bounded by that legal righteousness which Moses described: "The man which *doeth* these things shall live by them." In another epistle Paul thus accounts for their condition: "Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart" (2 Cor. III. 15). From Paul's eyes that veil had been lifted; Christ for him was *the end* of the law *for righteousness*, as also to every one *that believeth*."

In Deuteronomy xxx. 12, 13, Moses had written remarkable and mysterious words, viz. "Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us?" "Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us?" In quoting this striking passage the Apostle, under the Spirit's guidance, adopts a free rendering, punctuating each sentence with its appropriating, illuminating interpretation. In contrast to legal righteousness described by Moses, Paul asserts that the righteousness which is of faith is on this wise: "Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? [apostolic comment] (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, who shall descend into the deep? [apostolic comment] (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: [apostolic comment] that is, the word [subject-matter] of faith, *which we preach*." How marvellous this sublime unveiling of the great truths of redemption, INCARNATION, DEATH, and RESURRECTION, for long centuries shrouded in mysterious words.

Moses had identified Israel's restoration with *the heart* and *the mouth*. Hence the appeal: "If thou shalt *confess* with *thy mouth* Jesus as Lord [*i.e.* the exaltation of Jesus as Lord], and shalt *believe*

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in *thine heart* that God has raised Him from among the dead, thou shalt be saved" (N.T.). Thus Christ in incarnation, death, and resurrection, as the manifestation of divine love in active grace, stands in striking contrast to the law at Mount Sinai. The mount that burned with fire was connected with "fear" (Exod. xx. 20). "God is come to prove you, and that *His fear* may be before your faces"; whilst Mount Calvary breathes love which reaches *the heart*, generating responsive love, producing spontaneous confession with *the mouth*.

But redemption cannot be limited to Israel, for the Scripture saith: "*Whosoever* believeth on Him shall be saved." Grace in its universal superabundance overflowed Jewish limitations; there is "no difference between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over *all* is rich unto *all* that call upon Him. For *whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

From Jew and Gentile therefore, *i.e. from a lost humanity*, the cry for salvation individually must needs arise. But this leads the Apostle directly to the justification of "the gospel of peace" in its universal application. How shall the cry of distress ascend to One of whom nothing is known? How shall faith be focussed upon One of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without duly authorized preachers? How shall these assume so solemn a responsibility apart from a divine commission?

Even as to details such as these prophecy was not silent, for Isaiah had said, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (chap. LII. 7); to which the prophet adds, "that publish salvation." Again, "Isaiah saith, Who hath believed our report?" (N.T.). This quotation Paul applies in support of the necessity for an authoritative message, faith being by *a report*, but the report by God's Word (N.T.). Was this unbelief of Israel then due to failure in the proclamation of the report? "Have they not heard?" Appropriating the language of the Psalmist with reference to the heavens, the Apostle replies, "Yes surely, their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the extremities of the habitable world" (N.T.); so wide and so extensive was the announcement of "the gospel of peace."

But it was not only that "the glad tidings of good things" had reached them, but Israel had heard of blessing reaching to the Gentiles: first through Moses' word, with a view to moving the nation to jealousy (Deut. xxxii. 21); secondly through the prophet Isaiah, whose stronger statements eclipsed those of Moses: "I have been found by those *not seeking Me*; I have become manifest to those *not*



*inquiring after Me* " (N.T.). While of Israel Jehovah says, " I have stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people."

### THE SEVERITY OF GOD.

(CHAPTER XI.)

Did Israel's present condition involve the permanent casting away of the nation by Jehovah? Nay, for in Paul's own person, an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, testimony to the contrary was established. As in Ahab's day, in the midst of national apostasy a remnant had not bowed the knee to Baal: " Even so in the present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." But being of grace, the door was closed wholly on works, otherwise grace ceases to be grace; for grace and works exist as wholly irreconcilable because antagonistic principles, destructive the one of the other.

What the nation as a whole failed to obtain became the heritage of the elect. As to the rest, the table spread by Jehovah Himself, richly laden with the provision of grace in the Person of Christ, had become a stumbling-block and a snare to them; slumber and blindness had overtaken them under the governmental hand of God.

But strange mysteries were wrapped up in Jehovah's ways with His people. If Israel's fall was not sealed upon them permanently, it was that the purpose of God regarding the Gentiles might be made good: "Through their [Israel's] fall, salvation is come to the Gentiles."

But if Israel's ruin thus contributed to the riches of the Gentiles, how much more the day of their redemption. This enriching of the Gentiles the Apostle now proceeds to deal with in detail, addressing himself particularly to the Gentiles; thus magnifying his special office as holding a direct commission from God to them, and trusting thereby to provoke to emulation some of his own nation.

In verse 16 the Apostle furnishes the great principle upon which his after argument is based, viz. " If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so also are the branches," *i.e.* the origin and the outcome are identical in character.

Adopting the illustration of the root and the branches, Israel is likened to original branches of the olive tree, broken off because of unbelief, that the Gentiles, branches of the *wild* olive tree, might be grafted in to partake of the root and fatness thereof. These were to remember that they were not nourishers of the root, but the root nourisher of them; and that if the original branches were broken off "because of unbelief," they, the Gentiles, only stood on the principle of faith; and were to fear lest through unbelief the fate of the natural

branches should befall them. "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee."

But this leads the Apostle to enlarge upon the pivot of God's ways towards the Gentiles. If the door of His grace and goodness to them was thus thrown wide open, it revolved upon the hinge of the SEVERITY of God to the Jews as a nation: "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee goodness." But goodness was conditional to the Gentiles as to the Jews, viz. "If thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off." The form in which this severity of God was exercised towards the disobedient and rebellious nation was "blindness," not final and permanent, but "in part," until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. There was, therefore, on the part of these latter, no room left for being "wise in their conceits."

This conditional obedience of faith represents *the terms upon which Christendom now stands before God*: a very urgent and solemn consideration. Paul had received grace and apostleship, as to the gospel of God concerning His Son, to this end, *i.e.* "For obedience to the faith among all nations" (Rom. I. 1-5, XVI. 25, 26; 1 Peter IV. 17).

There are, then, two distinct standpoints from which the position of Israel can be viewed, viz. that of *the gospel* and that of *election*. As to the former, they were enemies for the sake of the Gentiles; as to the latter, they were beloved for the Father's sake. Whatever might befall them nationally in the righteous *government* of God, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," *i.e.* the divine mind changes not.

In time past the Gentiles were in unbelief, *i.e.* through ignorance of God; but have now obtained mercy through Israel's unbelief. "Now these [Israel] have not believed in your mercy, in order that they also may be objects of mercy" (N.T.). Thus God concludes all in unbelief, in order that He might show mercy to all.

The review of these marvellous ways of God, revealing and displaying the wisdom and knowledge of Deity, moves Paul's inmost spirit in compensating consolation under the sorrows with which his heart was burdened on behalf of his nation, and draws forth an outburst of praise and thanksgiving, as the profound problem of the conciliation of *the sovereignty of God* (chap. IX.), *the salvation of God* (chap. X.), and *the severity of God* (chap. XI.) solves itself beneath the illuminating revelations made to him. "Unsearchable His judgments, and untraceable His ways! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and for Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (N.T.).

## Meaning of Atonement.

*What is the meaning of Expiation, Propitiation, and Atonement?*

*Expiation* is a satisfaction offered to Him who is displeased and who judges. On the ground of this a purgation of offences, cleansing of sins, forgiveness, can be accorded to us.

*Propitiation* is that aspect of the death of Christ which has vindicated the holy, righteous claims and character of God.

*Atonement*, a work presented to God glorifying Him and meeting His holiness. The word means a covering. "Love covereth all sins." The *person* is looked at in love, instead of the faults or offences.

J. N. D.

On the great day of atonement Aaron took the place of the people in the confession of their sins. He was their representative; he did a work for them; he carried the blood of the victim inside the veil and made propitiation. This, strictly speaking, was not a priestly act, though the high priest did it. Neither bullock nor goat could lay their life down voluntarily, nor carry their own blood inside the veil; hence Aaron's work on that day must be viewed as one of *identification* with them from start to finish;

he did typically what Christ did actually.

Christ on the cross took the place of Aaron, confessing the sins of the people; but He could do (and did) what Aaron could not do—bear the judgment due to them, was both Scapegoat and Bullock, presenting His own blood when He offered up His life. Forsaken during the hours of darkness, He not only suffered for our sins, but vindicated every claim of the outraged majesty of God, then voluntarily laid down His life, bowed His head, saying, "It is finished," committed His Spirit in perfect peace to God His Father, propitiation having been fully made and God glorified.

To shed blood and take away life are synonymous terms in Scripture. The blood is the life thereof, hence it was by Christ's own blood He entered once for all into the holy of holies, having found an eternal redemption.

The veil was rent at the same moment the loud cry was uttered. God could now come out in blessing, man could go in in righteousness. This is distinctly linked up with the closing act when He gave up His life (Mark xv. 37, 38), proving that nothing more had to be accomplished, all was now finished.

*The holy place*, where propitiation was made, found its antitype when Christ was hidden from the gaze of men on the cross. There He presented Himself without spot—a perfect Victim, personally and relatively—there He was made to feel and know what sin is in God's sight, there He endured the judgment due to sin. The closing act was the giving up of the life to which, *in us*, sin was attached, and in which He voluntarily took our sins. On the cross He was Priest, Victim, and Mercy Seat. He not only shed the blood of atonement, but is Himself the Propitiatory on which the blood was sprinkled. Every part prefigured on the great day of atonement is fully answered by Christ's work on the cross.

Christ is the High Priest.

Christ is the Bullock and both Goats.

Christ is the Mercy Seat.

Christ is the Veil—His flesh was rent.

Christ is the Incense beaten small—the perfect fragrance of His obedience filled the holy place.

The hiding of God's face, the claims of His throne, the judgment due to our sins, the horror of darkness, and the blood sprinkled, the life given up in death—all different but integral parts of that typified on the great day of atonement, were fully, perfectly accomplished on the cross. He then went in perfect peace out of this world (having committed His Spirit to God His Father), *not to complete the work, but because it was completed*, uttering those peace-giving words: "It is finished."

Having glorified God in respect of sin, God raised Him from the dead, and set Him on the very throne whose claims He had met, and has saluted Him as Priest of a wholly new order, the true Melchisedec.

## Questions on Ephesians.

ANSWERS BY J. A. TRENCH.

*IS "predestination" in verse II connected with the inheritance?* of all that He is heir to, having been predestinated to nothing short of this.

Yes. The Revised Version, which makes us but His inheritance, is misleading. Israel was Jehovah's inheritance, but we are in Christ; and thus we are identified with Him in whatever position He will ever take—heirs

*What is the difference between the "pleasure of His will," the "mystery of His will," and the "counsel of His will"?*

I believe that as each expression is weighed in its own con-

nection we shall be able to enter more into its fitness. The good pleasure of His will is what God finds for His own satisfaction in what He wills. The mystery of His will is that which He has purposed in Himself for the glory of Christ, and made known unto us (vers. 9, 10). In working all things after the counsel of His own will, He has given us our place in connection with that glory beyond all thought: "To the praise of His glory."

*How would you distinguish "redemption" and "forgiveness"?*

Redemption and the forgiveness of sins are identified both here and Colossians 1. 14, because the latter is so absolutely the effect for us of the former. We could not have one without the other.

*In chapter 11. 5 we are said to be "dead in sins." Can a dead man be forgiven? Are we viewed as "living" in sins (chap. 1.), and thus needing forgiveness?*

It is true that we are not viewed as living in sins, but as dead in them, in Ephesians. But Colossians 11. 13, where the point of view is the same, shows that the truth must not be pressed so far as to exclude forgiveness; for it says: "Quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses" ("sins" the same word). But this is not the connection before us, but rather where the chain of God's counsels has been linked on with us, if it

be the lowest link, and the ground was found upon which we could be taken up in them according to all the riches of His grace.

*We are said in chapter 11. 13 "to be made nigh in Christ Jesus by the blood." Why is the Person mentioned before the work?*

From verse 11 the assembly is seen on earth as the positive subsisting effect of the work of God opened out in the previous verses, and the contrast is strongly drawn of the former state of those who compose it. Specially as to the Gentiles here "in Christ Jesus" is the position of the assembly; the blood of Christ the ground upon which those once far off are made nigh in Him as the only measure of it, "For He is our peace"; that is, between Jew and Gentile as well as between both and God. The law that formerly instituted a middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile shut out both alike, if in differing measures, from God; but it was brought to naught in the flesh of Christ in death, in order to create in Him one new man, where no such distinctions existed any longer, so making peace.

*What is the meaning of verse 15: "Of twain one new man"?*

The new man conveys the thought of the new life and nature in which believers of both Jew and Gentile partake alike. See chapter 14. 24 and Colossians

## Our Calling

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III. II. It is the moral material, if one may so say, of which the body of Christ is composed, imparting to each member of that body a common character—hence “one new man.” It is connected with new creation in all three passages, though in the last two it is more in its individual aspect; we are seen as having put on the new man (as we have put off the old) and become endued with it.

Thus there is the reconciliation of both Jew and Gentile in one body to God by the cross, the enmity having been slain thereby; and the Son Himself the first preacher of the peace He had made to those afar off and to those relatively near. With the wonderful result of access to the Father through Christ by the Spirit, the whole Trinity being engaged in it.

*How do you distinguish the city (ver. 19), the temple (ver. 21), and the habitation (ver. 22)?*

The city, if by it be meant that for which Abraham looked, and that comes out in the glory of God in Revelation XXI. *et seq.*, is hardly implied in “fellow-

citizens of the saints,” but recalls if by way of contrast “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel” (ver. 12)—the terms used suggesting it: the city is yet future. This their present relationship to one another, as “of the household of God,” speaks of their relationship to Him. For besides the one new man and one body, with privileged access to the Father, of all embraced therein, we have now the fact of unspeakable moment that the assembly has its relationship to God as His dwelling-place upon earth by the Spirit.

Verse 21 presents the whole building fitly framed together growing to what it will be in the eternal glory, not only God’s house, but His temple, the holy sanctuary which will be the home of the presence of His glory for ever. But God does not wait till then to take up His dwelling in it, for verse 22 gives us the present subsisting fact that in the Lord saints builded together form His habitation now, by the Spirit come down on the day of Pentecost.

*We love many believers in Christ, and wish them well, from whose associations we are obliged to keep separate.*

*To be a child of God, and to hold the place of an obedient child,*

*and walk in the holy atmosphere of the Father’s love, may involve breaking the nearest and dearest natural ties, but compensation will be found in that “the Father Himself loveth you.”*

## Jottings on Ephesians.

(J. GRAY).

## THE FATHER

Comes to light in a new way in this epistle. We not only learn that we have access to Him by one Spirit, brought into relationship with Him as children, with all the affections involved in and suited to that relationship, but that we are before Him for His own peculiar delight, the objects of His choice and fruit of sovereign grace.

## A NEW MAN

Is brought on the scene. Out of Jew and Gentile a man has been formed in whom all the moral excellencies of Christ are to be displayed. The meek and lowly One is to be reproduced in His people; they are ever to bear about in their body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be manifested in them.

## A NEW TEMPLE

Is being built. Solomon's temple, in all its glory, cannot compare with it. It is not only *of* the Lord, but *in* the Lord; holiness of truth, divine righteousness are inscribed on every stone. In the day of display it will be manifested as a holy city; no temple will be seen in it, as a separate enclosure, for every part being holy, need will no longer exist to veil off the worshippers from the immediate presence of God. God and the Lamb are the temple of it, their glory will radiate every part.

## A NEW HABITATION.

This is viewed as complete at any given time of the church's history since the day of Pentecost, whilst the temple ever grows and is never completed here. God has chosen the church for His dwelling-place; it is His habitation for ever. He shall never cease to dwell in His redeemed. The city is the witness of this during kingdom days as the tabernacle of God will be in eternal days.

## A NEW CITY.

All saints are citizens; their commonwealth is in heaven; they are citizens of no mean city. Descending from God out of heaven in the age to come, with its gates of pearl and foundations of precious stones; the glory of God filling every part; rule, order, glory emanating from it; no night there, no defilement—what a cluster of glories are within its walls; what honours the kings of the earth will bring to its gates!