

# SIMPLE TESTIMONY.

*A Monthly Magazine.*

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“As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.”—1 PETER ii. 2.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.”—ACTS xvii. 11, 12.

“The Word of the Lord endureth for ever.”—1 PETER i. 25.

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VOL. X.

LONDON: A. S. ROUSE,

15 & 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1893.



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## SIMPLE TESTIMONY.



### WORDS TO "ONE IN DESPAIR."

*(Being an Answer to a Correspondent.)*

**I**T is God alone, dear friend, who can read the heart, and He knows whether your letter to us is an exact statement of your case, or whether in your despondency you have painted the picture in colours too dark and dismal, as most persons in your condition are apt to do.

But if it be actually and literally true that for more than twenty years you have suffered yourself to pass as a Christian, and all the while had no right to be regarded as one; if for twenty years or more you have sat at the Lord's table, knowing that you had no just title to be there, is it not a very great favour from God that you have been led at length to own this? Better, infinitely better, for such a disclosure to take place now than in that great day when the King shall come in to see the guests. (Matthew xxii. 11.) *Then* there will be no escape for those that have not on the wedding garment; *now*, thank God, there is.

Certainly it is no part of Satan's plan to alarm the soul as yours has been. He would rather it should be kept in peace; rocked to sleep in one of his many cradles. Why, then, should you not look on this arousing as a very special and tender proof of God's love towards you? He wounds but to heal, and graciously takes away the broken reeds on which we lean, that we may rest on a sure and firm foundation. Be of good courage; you have less reason to despair than you are disposed to think.

It is only natural that you should bemoan your *want of feeling* in reference to your guilty, ruined state before God. But this complaint makes it clear that you *know* what that state is, or you would not lament your supposed lack; so that even here it is not wholly dark, there is that ray of light. No doubt you would be a little comforted did you feel your position so acutely that you wept at every remembrance of it, only in that case—think me not hard in saying so—your comfort would flow from nothing but a sobbing *self*, and what would be the worth of that? Self is self even if it wear a woeful garb, and have eyes swollen and red with many tears.

Numbers like yourself have hungered, for long and weary seasons, after "*feelings*" which have never come, and never will. They are miserable because they are not more miserable; downcast and dejected because their heart is so hard. Thus

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they are perpetually occupied with themselves, and sink lower and lower in "the slough of despond." Oh that they would turn from this wretched, good-for-nothing self to Christ, and cast themselves upon His boundless grace! It was for vile and helpless sinners that He died, and all such are welcome to His salvation—freely and without price.

Mistake me not. There is such a thing as adequate sorrow for sin; there is such a thing as suited depth of feeling at such a fall from God as sin has brought about. But where shall we look for it? Is it to be found in the soul of a poor sinner even if he be deeply wrought upon by the Holy Spirit? In vain to seek it there. Adequate sorrow for sin, feelings commensurate with the evil we have done, can only be seen in one blessed Person. In Jesus, smitten on the cross, bruised and put to grief, I see the sorrow that no one else could feel—streams, rivers, seas, oceans of sorrow, in comparison with which the utmost I might feel would be less than the dewdrop that glistens on a blade of grass.

Here let me ask you one question, How came you to be conscious of your being a guilty, ruined sinner in the sight of God? There are thousands who are not; I would to God they were. How came *you* to be? Did the Evil One show you that? or did you learn so solemn a truth apart from any divine teaching whatsoever? Is the

consciousness of your guilt, think you, a mark that God has given you up? Assuredly not. Believe me, a fact so humbling and yet so true is only learned in that school where the Holy Ghost is teacher. Besides, you tell me that you have often prayed to be shown your true state before God. Behold the answer to your prayers! God has given you the desire of your heart, and your letter now lying before us is the proof and confession of His having done so. Oh, praise His name that He has blessed you thus far!

You are in distress too because you have discovered that you think more of the judgment to which your sins expose you than of their hatefulness in God's sight. It would be easy to show that self lurks beneath all this, for self knows how to dress in a lowly garb, and pride can ape humility. But, I ask, why this distress? Why this desire to be saved? It seems, after all, that you are not so callous as you would fain make yourself out to be. Doubtless it is most important that we should see our sins in the light of God's holy presence; but it is certain that in many cases the fear of being lost operates at first more powerfully than anything else. Numbers will bear witness to that. Shall we then cast doubt on their conversion because the terrors of eternal judgment have driven them to the feet of Jesus? All conversions are not moulded after the same pattern. Generally speaking, it is after

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conversion, not before, that we learn to view our sins in their relation to God and to His holiness. Then we learn to hate sin because it is hateful to God, and then, too, the work of repentance, begun at conversion, takes a deeper form in the soul, leading to further blessing.

Assuming that you have not as yet believed on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul, are you willing to do so now? One of the first effects of our believing on Him is that we commit ourselves to Him; we trust Him. So the apostle Paul could say, speaking for himself, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.)

To make this plain, let me suppose that you were forced by dire necessity to cross some dangerous mountain pass. Many had tried to traverse it alone, and had invariably perished in the attempt, nor was there the least reason to believe that you would be more fortunate than they. In an auspicious hour a guide offers you his services. He can point to a multitude which no man could number whom he had guided safely across without losing so much as one. He demands no recompense; all he asks is that you should commit yourself to him, and he pledges his word to take you in safety through every peril. Believing him, you gladly place yourself in his care, follow his direction, and get safely across.

Can you not trust the Lord Jesus in the same manner? You cannot save yourself, but He can save you. Will you commit yourself to Him? Whether, if you do so, He will save you or suffer you ultimately to perish is a further point. Thank God, Scripture too makes that abundantly clear; but the first thing is, Are you ready to trust Him, and will you trust Him now?

Why should you not? If you possessed some costly treasure which you were obliged to take along a road infested with robbers, and a stranger asked you to entrust your treasure to him for safety, you might do well to hesitate. But the Lord Jesus is no stranger. He is not unknown. What are those marks in His hands and side and feet? What story do they tell? Can you not trust *Him*? Would you grieve Him by your distrust?

Lord Jesus, I do trust Thee. To Thee I now commit myself, guilty, ruined, lost. But for Thee, I know I must perish for ever. My sins are many. Nothing can wash them away but Thy precious blood. O Saviour, without Thee I shall sink in everlasting woe. Other refuge have I none, but on Thee my helpless soul hangs. If I perish, I will perish clinging to Thee.

Let that be the language of your heart, and you will have no reason again to subscribe yourself "*One in despair.*"

If anyone thus committing himself to Jesus

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were to perish in spite of it, what a triumph for Satan, and what a slur on the Saviour's name! How it would ring through the dark domains of the lost that at least one sinner when on earth had believed and trusted in Christ, and nevertheless had been cast out, rejected, driven from His door! But, blessed be God, such a thing shall never be.

And as to your feeling no love to God, How should you? It is true that the creature should love the Creator. Therefore *the law* came to those who were under it and said, "Man, you must love God with all the strength of heart and mind." Alas! it is there the creature has most miserably broken down. But *the gospel* comes not to demand love, but to reveal it. It does not say, "Man, you must love God"; but, "Sinner, God loves you." For "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now when that love is believed, it is then the believing soul loves Him in return. Not before. "We love Him, because He first loved us."

May you, dear friend, rest in that love, so that you may say with all your heart—

"Oh, the love of God is boundless,  
Perfect, causeless, full and free!  
Doubts have vanished, fears are groundless  
Now I know that love to me."

God grant it for Jesus' sake.

## DAVID'S SHEEP.

**I**T was a notable day in Bethlehem when Samuel the prophet journeyed there. All the people turned out to meet him, and Jesse's sons amongst them. Seven of them came, and only David stayed behind at his work.

Eliab, the firstborn, looked a likely man, but God refused him. Why? *The Lord had looked on his heart.* What a solemn announcement! In the narrow circle of home interests he failed to manifest the spirit becoming to an elder brother (1 Samuel xvii. 28), and when the time came that he might have been offered Israel's crown he was set aside.

No doubt it seemed hard to Eliab that he should lose the kingdom because he could not keep his temper; but the Lord refused him. How can he govern others who fails in self-control? But, mark, it is not that his efforts at right living had been unsuccessful. He was wrong at heart. The glimpse we get at his character reveals a harsh, overbearing man, who "hath no rule over his own spirit."

One reason only accounts for Jehovah's preference—"the Lord looketh on the heart." Have you realized, dear reader, that the eternal God



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was concerning Himself about the hopes and desires of a youth in his teens! What a world of thought the acknowledgment suggests. Does He the same to-day? How momentous!

Reader, What are your day-dreams like? Many of us would hide our faces with shame if the pictures of the imagination were painted on the wall. What do you understand by "a castle in the air"? Let me tell you. It is the mental picture of a scene in which a huge capital I is to the front, and other persons and circumstances are arranged to make an effective background. The details infinitely varied. The character always the same. God looks on the heart.

What then had He found in David's heart? Psalm cxxxii. will tell us. Listen!

"He sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. *Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah; we found it in the fields of the wood.\** We will go into His tabernacles; we will worship at His footstool . . . the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is *My* rest for ever: here will I dwell: for I have desired it."

This was the secret of Jehovah's choice. By the sheepfold there, He could say, I see a youth

\* I would say that I am indebted to the valued ministry of another for the thought of applying this passage to David's shepherd life.

whose desires are for My glory, whose sympathies are in step with My purposes, who makes My interests his own. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him : for *this is he.*"

While David was busy with his work God's call came to him. Such an event was not without its precedent, and similar cases have occurred since. The incident has its lesson for ourselves. May we heed it.

We meet the sheep again in chapter xvii. 15, and this passing reference is not without instruction. "David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem." From the attractions of the court he returns to his appointed work, nor had the influences of an exalted position spoiled him for his humbler service.

It may be, dear reader, the Lord has allowed you to feed and care for some of His sheep down here, and, if so, I would say, Take heed to the ministry that you have received of the Lord, that you fulfil it. There may be great attractions elsewhere, but do you go back to those sheep till your service among them is completed. You have not, like the apostle Paul, the care of all the churches, but surely you have a part in the cares of one. Would the saints suffer any loss if you were taken away from amongst them ?

We are not told if these were black sheep or white—prone to wander, or fond of the fold.

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One word only describes them—they were his *father's* sheep. That word measured their value, and David's care. It made him serve as a son, and not as a hireling. We may suppose that Jesse chose and purchased the little flock, and this consideration would give them an importance in David's eyes which their individual characteristics might not have claimed.

Eliab could speak in tones of contempt of "those few sheep in the wilderness," and unjustly taunt his brother with neglecting them (compare *vv.* 20 and 28); but David's estimate of worth was not based on numbers, and in a day of small things he was faithful in that which was least.

The last mention of the sheep is in verses 33–37.

"And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.

"And David said unto Saul, *Thy servant kept his father's sheep*, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. . . . David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

Perhaps some of Saul's captains smiled at the youth's simplicity. His ideas did not seem to reach beyond the incidents of his shepherd life,

and yet he wanted to accept the challenge of one who defied the armies of the living God!

Ah! but I like the way David turns to those sheep. In the unnoticed, but not uneventful, course of his daily life he had so proved God, that, when the supreme moment of his history came, he went forward to victory in the confidence of faith, with the five smooth stones of human weakness, and in the name of the Lord of hosts.

Now, my reader, has the daily task seemed a burden to you? Have those hours at the bench or at the desk seemed time lost spiritually? Have you thought that God wills to occupy a third of your days to no profit beyond the interests of time? Then read again the lesson of David's sheep. Let its meaning sink deep into your soul, and influence every detail of your pathway. Understand that God makes no mistakes in planning out the time-sheet of your life, and if He keep you eight hours daily at the desk, it is because His purpose can be served in no other way.

I cannot say what He would teach you by the discipline of work, or for what more public service He may be fitting you; but if you have not found *God your resource* in the occupations and trials of everyday life, you have failed to learn the lesson of David's sheep.

S. E. M<sup>c</sup>N.

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“Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.”

DEUT. xxii. 9-11.

**G**OD is not the author of confusion. In Him is unmixed good, and His ways are the display of that goodness. In His people He seeks the formation of that which is according to His own nature and character without any admixture of that which is evil.

With Satan is unmixed evil. He whose testimony cannot be questioned, said of him, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” (John viii. 44.) It would be his delight to establish on the earth unmixed evil in defiance of all that is divine. But God has not abandoned the earth, though His acting, in the permission of evil, may be to us mysterious. He allows Satan to make full proof of his wickedness, and He is willing that all man’s weakness and sinfulness should be clearly manifested; yet amidst all this He is working

out the accomplishment of His own gracious purposes. In due time all that God has wrought shall be triumphantly displayed, and the power of evil for ever set aside. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly. In the meantime He would have us wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. (Rom. xvi. 19, 20.)

We have then in this present world the evil workings of Satan amidst the gracious working of that which is good by the blessed God. Hence the scene of confusion which it presents. Further than this we need to understand that the evil workings of Satan are often of the most subtle nature, so that the unwary are deceived. And in his subtlety he takes advantage of the deceitfulness of our own hearts, presenting things which suit our natural tastes, and easily persuading us that such things are not evil. How deeply important it is then that the children of God should have exercised senses to discern both good and evil (Heb. v. 14), and should be so kept in communion with God as to that which is good, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that they may be enabled to refuse that which is evil.

In these days there is constant temptation to mingle good and evil. As Satan cannot overthrow the work of God, either in the world or in the experience of the individual, he works insidiously to corrupt it, and often the believer

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unsuspectingly falls into the snare. With a master hand Satan seeks to blend the human with the divine, the principles of the flesh with those of the Spirit, and the elements of the world with those of Christianity. In this way he cheats the children of God out of the present enjoyment of their true blessing, and dishonours the name of Him to whom they belong.

The word of God comes in to help us, for it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. It plainly prohibits the mischievous mingling which Satan would bring about. Both in the principles of the Old Testament and in the doctrine of the New Testament it is alike forbidden. Further than this the true character of the evil principles is exposed to us that we may be on our guard against them. And still better, the preciousness of that which is divine is unfolded to captivate and hold the heart, so that nothing beside shall be desired.

With all this in view let us consider the portion quoted at the head of this paper. It is an Old Testament ordinance for the earthly people of God, but its principles are unmistakable and deeply important in their spiritual bearing.

Our first question may be—

**What do we cultivate?**

The ordinance related to the cultivation of an Israelite's vineyard, producing the wine which,

it is said, "cheereth God and man." It must not be sown with divers seeds, or the end would be defilement.

All own that there is cultivation in a moral sense, and all are cultivating something morally, even if it be, alas! the proverbial "wild oats." Whatever it be that man is cultivating he expects to find joy in it, even as the Israelite expected the cheering wine from the cultivation of his vineyard.

There is a large variety of things which men cultivate, but all may be divided into two classes, for there are two sources of what may be called joy—the flesh and the Spirit. It is evident that if anyone cultivates the flesh in a wicked way he will in the end have nothing but corruption and sorrow. Drunkenness, immorality, and every form of open wickedness bring their own solemn end; but the fruit of the cultivation of the flesh in all its refined tastes is not so openly manifest. The book of Ecclesiastes, written by the wise king of Israel, whom none excelled, shews us that the end of all his pursuits was "vanity and vexation of spirit." Again, we have in Saul of Tarsus the most beautiful cultivation of religious flesh the world has ever seen. Yet he was not happy in it. The One who spoke to him from glory, knowing the inmost secrets of his heart, said, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." And when



his eyes were opened, even at the very topmost pinnacle of religious success, he found himself a high-handed rebel against God, His Christ, and His church. Surely "the flesh profiteth nothing," and those who cultivate it, even in its most refined pursuits or in its most religious ways, reap only sorrow and dissatisfaction.

Let us now recall the well-known words of the Lord Jesus: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 13, 14.) He proposed to give to man here upon earth present, perfect, absolute satisfaction in the power of the Holy Spirit whom believers receive. Further than this He made known the precious communications He brought from a Father's heart, saying, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John xv. 11.) What wondrous words are these! And how precious the reality to which they testify! He delights to bring His loved ones into the very depth of the Father's affections, that in that heavenly circle they may have divine fulness of joy.

This, then, is the present portion of the believer in the Lord Jesus. He has been taught the vanity of the world and the profitlessness of the flesh, but the grace of God has opened to

him, through the death of Jesus and in His resurrection, a scene of cloudless and eternal joy, in which it is his privilege even now to live by faith and in the power of the Spirit. The believer, instructed by the scripture, thankfully accepts this as the truth. Yet how many are grieving because the realisation of it in their souls is so dim, and some, recalling the blessedness they had when first they knew the Lord, are mourning over a growing coldness which they seem powerless to overcome.

Let us be permitted then to turn to a most solemn passage of scripture (Gal. vi. 7, 8), "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Does not this expose to us the sad secret of our joylessness? Is it not that we have in some way been cultivating the flesh, and neglecting the Spirit? and when we have expected a harvest of joy we have only reaped one of sorrow? Do not think we speak of open wickedness. The reaping in that case is so evident that we need not to say anything. But let us consider our ways. Have we been kept conscious at all times of the presence of the blessed Spirit of God within us? and have we, through grace, been cultivating that which is of Himself? Has the word of God been our

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food, prayer our daily breath of dependence upon God, everything touched and handled for Him alone? Alas! how sadly we have to confess that we have sown with divers seeds! Our Bibles have not been wholly neglected, and we have not altogether refused prayer, yet in how much have we been living to ourselves, and in how many things found cultivating the flesh. It would be mischievous to think that when the apostle spoke of sowing to the flesh he had only open wickedness in view. The Galatians were sowing to their flesh in seeking to adopt circumcision and to put themselves under law, but they could not revive the flesh doctrinally, in whatever fair ways they would do it, without reaping of all its corruption in practice. Oh, how needed then is this solemn warning! It is as we sow to the Spirit that we reap all the joy and blessedness of eternal life, which is our own blessed portion through the grace of our God.

But there may be two practical difficulties which we will name. Some may say, Is not this legality? Will it not be grievous bondage to be afraid of touching anything that would minister to our flesh? May we not glance at a newspaper, nor read ordinary books, nor be sociable with our friends? Our reply is that it is in the epistle foremost against legality that this solemn warning is written for us. Man fosters the flesh in submission to legal ordinances, but as we walk

in the Spirit we delight to be obedient to God's will. We are never free for a moment nor in the slightest matters to do our own will; we are ever free to do the will of God, which is the only true liberty. And again, if poisoned dishes were set before you of the daintiest morsels, would you think yourself legal in abstaining from them? Or if you meddled with them in the smallest degree, would you be surprised if you were unwell as the consequence? It is God's will, and our true health and happiness, that we abstain from everything that would minister to the flesh, but that we diligently cultivate that which is of the Spirit.

There is another true difficulty, however, on the other hand. Some may say, We have businesses or professions which necessitate our having to do with newspapers and books of various kinds. What shall we do? To such we say, It is your privilege to do God's will. It has been said that the path of duty is the path of safety, and certainly we may count upon Him whom we serve to preserve us in the way He has ordained for us. But let us see to it that all things we do form links of practical intercourse with God, instead of being means of severing our souls from communion with Him. Thus, even in the path of our ordinary duties, in prayerful intercourse with God about them, the sowing goes on which results in a harvest of joy and blessing.

The second question we must consider a little is,

**With whom do we associate ?**

Ploughing is a means to an end. Man is often careless as to means if he but reaches his end. Some even go so far as to say that the end justifies the means. But God is careful about the means as well as the end. So in the matter of ploughing. An Israelite might have viewed it as a matter of indifference whether the animals yoked together in his plough were diverse or otherwise, if he could only have his field ploughed and cultivated. But God would not have it so. "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together."

Nor was it with Him a merely arbitrary decision. He ever has perfectly wise reasons for that which He denies to His people. In this case it is easy to see the comeliness of His ordinance, for, turning to Lev. xi., we find that ceremonially the ox was a clean animal, chewing the cud and dividing the hoof, whereas the ass, doing neither, was esteemed unclean. God would not therefore have the clean and the unclean yoked together.

To this ordinance the apostle evidently referred when to the Corinthians (2 Cor. vi. 14-18) he wrote these solemn words:—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and

what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? (literally) and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

It has been asked, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) The ox and the ass are not so diverse as are the believer and the unbeliever in God's thoughts of them. To express that diversity He puts in contrast righteousness and unrighteousness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and idols: so widely diverse are believers and unbelievers.

Yet Satan has various schemes for yoking them together, and often blinds the eyes of believers by bidding them heed the good end which is to be attained. To take one of the commonest forms, What is a greater snare to a young believer than worldly companions? Perhaps they were his companions before conversion, or they may be employed in the same place of business, or there

is some other link which serves to put them together. They cannot go together without the believer feeling the diversity which exists between them; for if he desires to walk with God, to feed upon His word, to live in the enjoyment of heavenly things, he must feel that the bent of his companions is quite different. Then, perhaps, when his conscience becomes uneasy about it, he seeks to silence it by saying, Who knows but my companionship may prove their salvation? Yet lower and lower he sinks, losing relish for the word of God and divine things; for as the worldling cannot rise to the level of the believer, the believer must sink to the level of the worldling. Oh, we would most earnestly warn the young believer against worldly companions! Let the word which God in His love and wisdom has written for us be obeyed. Let us beware of any seductive influence which would set it aside. We may not be, for any reason whatever, the associates of the world.

Yet some may say, We have to work amongst the unsaved. So it may be, but there is an immense difference between encountering them in the path of duty and choosing them as our companions. A traveller in a foreign country may need to pass along a path which is infested by poisonous serpents, and he does it carefully, ever on the look-out. But he would never think of taking one of the serpents he dreads, to fondle

it and make it his companion. We may count upon grace to keep us in our duties ; but let us diligently see to it that we walk with God and His beloved people in holy separation from the world.

We need not now stay to dwell upon the various associations of many kinds and for many purposes for which the believer is continually sought. Once the principle is firmly established in our souls the application of it is easy, although it may demand self-sacrifice. Yet what is that sacrifice, when we compare it with the irreparable loss of communion with God which we must suffer if walking in disobedience to His word and in neglect of divine principles ?

Our third question is :

**What is the formation of our own character ?**

God was careful of His earthly people, even to the appearance which they should present to others. He arranged even their dress. So here we have it, "Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together."

In the case of God's priests, their dress when ministering to Him was wholly of linen. As it is said respecting the priests of the time to come, "They shall be clothed with linen garments ; and no wool shall come upon them whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. . . . They shall not gird themselves with any thing



that causeth sweat." (Ezekiel xliv. 17, 18.) That which was connected with the mere exuberance of nature would not suit the presence and the service of God.

We are also reminded of the clothing of the Lamb's wife, as she is spoken of in Rev. xix. 8. "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." Thus is seen the suited companion for Christ in glory. There is not one woollen thread mingled with the fabric of her dress; it is of fine linen, clean and white. It is explained to us also that by this is set forth the righteous acts of the saints. Not the product of a natural heart wrought out in fleshly energy, but the precious fruit of the Spirit wrought out in His beloved saints, and now manifested in glory as divine in its character, and suited to Christ.

What can be more sweet to the one who realises his place and portion with Christ than thus to look forward and see the fashion of that heavenly dress? To suit him everything must *now* partake of that order of things. He rejects the woollen, even to a thread of it, for he must have the fine linen, clean and white.

We find it in the apostle Paul and his companions: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the

grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." (2 Cor. i. 12.) He was continually seen, as one might say, in the priestly linen, the fabric which alone will suit the bride in the day of her supreme joy. Again we hear him saying, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." (1 Thess. ii. 10.) The formation of his outward character was, through grace, such as man and God approve.

We commend these things to your earnest consideration, beloved reader, convinced of their deep importance. In our cultivation let us not mingle the flesh with the Spirit; in our association let us not connect the world and the children of God; and in the formation of our character let us not introduce that which is human to mar that which is divine. May our God, in His infinite grace, keep us in the enjoyment of that which is good, that we may be enabled to refuse that which is evil!

J. R.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"ONE IN DESPAIR."—An answer to your letter will be found in another part of our present issue.

R. F. (Isaiah liii. 12.)—We are disposed to look upon this verse as Jehovah's declaration that the toil and sufferings of our blessed Saviour shall not be without reward. The battle has been fought, and He

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has triumphed, and the fruit and spoil shall be great. It is a declaration of the fact in popular language that such shall be the case. No doubt the redeemed share in the fruit of the Redeemer's work, but we hardly think "the great" and "the strong" point to them or to any particular class whatever.

Your question on Ezekiel i. 16 we do not understand. If you can make it plainer, we will endeavour to answer it.

W. T. (John iii. 36.)—While it is quite true that life everlasting is the blessed portion of all who believe on the Son of God, yet, on the other side, nothing but wrath—the wrath of God—abides on him who is not subject to the Son. Now, though we know that God's love is towards the sinner, we know equally well that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." (Romans i. 18.) It is revealed, but not yet poured out. The sky of the unbeliever is dark with those threatening clouds held back for a time by the hand of divine mercy. But the storm will one day burst upon an unbelieving world—then the overhanging wrath will descend and abide for ever on the rejecter of the Saviour. Meanwhile there is a sure Refuge, and God most graciously bids the sinner seek it, and assures him of a place and a welcome there. Now that Refuge is Christ.

COLOSSIANS ii. 11.—It will be observed that "*the sins of*" in this verse are in italics, and therefore may be omitted; and, indeed, in the Revised Version they do not appear. It reads "the body of the flesh." This, of course, does not mean the material body of

flesh and blood, bone and sinew, in which we live. It is the flesh in a moral sense that is here alluded to. All that we were as of Adam morally considered—men in our sins, and in our distance and alienation from God—all has gone in the death of Christ. Faith reckons this to be true, because in the thoughts of God it is so, and rejoices in the new standing and condition in which the believer is in Christ, and in which “the flesh” has no place at all.

INQUIRER.—*The gift of tongues.*—In the parting commission of our Lord to His disciples, as given in Mark xvi. 17, it is said that those who believed in Him should speak with “new tongues.” This speaking with new tongues was one of the many signs that were to follow, and in Acts ii. 4 we see its historical fulfilment, for they “began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Thus the strangers in Jerusalem, coming from the places named in verses 9–11, heard in their own dialects the wonderful works of God. So far the gift of tongues is easily understood, and its miraculous nature plainly declared. In 1 Corinthians xiv. we find the tongue-gift exercised in the Christian assembly, but its use forbidden there, unless some one could interpret, otherwise it would not be for the edifying of the Church; for tongues were “a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” “Such a gift,” as another has said, “was beautifully suited to this dispensation, and especially at its beginning, both for its practical value to the evangelist, and, above all, as the witness of that grace which now published God’s wonderful works in the very languages which originally sprang out of a divine judgment.” (Genesis xi.)

## GLAD TIDINGS FOR THE GUILTY.

I WONDER whether you have ever read with care Romans iii. 9-18? You may have read it many a time, but have you read it *with care*? If not, let me beg you to do so the first opportunity you have. It will not cost you much, and ten verses are easily got through.

Those verses describe humanity at large, as it presents itself to the eye of God, who, as you know, sees every one in his just and true light. The pale-faced European, the yellow-skinned Asiatic, the copper-coloured Indian, the tawny Malay, the black African, are all portrayed in this moral photograph which God holds up to view. It is, I must confess, a sorry picture, dark and dismal in the extreme. Throat, tongue, eyes, lips, mouth, and feet find a place in it, and all of them set in connections that are serious indeed.

I shall not be surprised if, after having read the passage, you should exclaim, "But that picture is not descriptive of me. The evils there described cannot be laid at my door. My feet have never been swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are not in my ways, nor has my mouth ever been full of cursing and bitterness. These things may be true, more or less, of the refuse and dregs of society, the frequenters of flaunting gin-palaces, the denizens of the

jail, the frail sisterhood of London, east and west, but not of me. Of that I am quite sure."

Ah, but you forget that everything in the heart of man could not be shown in one member of the fallen family! Since that unhappy hour when Eve, the mother of us all, ate of the forbidden fruit, sin has assumed ten thousand ghastly shapes. The life of one individual sinner is far too narrow a stage for this foul monster to display itself in all its hideous forms—there would not be room enough. A broader platform it must have, and this it finds in the history of the human race. To that platform, be assured of it, your life as well as mine has contributed its plank.

Only this afternoon a Christian lady told me how in days gone by she had fought and struggled against this solemn truth. An aged servant of Christ had been trying to show her that her heart was just as bad as the hearts of those who were wallowing in the coarsest sins. But she was a communicant, a Sunday-school teacher, a district visitor, and she could not see how that could be. They chanced to be walking in the garden, and presently stood still before two gooseberry-bushes, one laden with fruit, and the other having but one solitary berry upon it. "What bush is this?" said he, pointing to the one covered with berries. "A gooseberry, to be sure," replied his companion. "And what is this?" turning towards the other. "A gooseberry too," was the answer. "Are you

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quite sure?" "Quite. See, there is a gooseberry on it." "Ah! that is just the lesson I want you to learn," rejoined he. "That one berry shows the sort of bush it is, and in like manner one sin shows what is in your heart. If you have not fallen into gross sins, as many have, it is not because your heart is better than theirs. Had you been in their circumstances you might have done the same things, or even worse. The seeds of every evil are in your heart, and it only needs the suited surroundings, and their growth and development would be assured." How true and wise were the words of that dear old man!

And this is clearly discerned when divine light breaks through the darkness which environs every soul at first. Then, according to the vision of Ezekiel, the individual enters the chamber of his imagery, and sees portrayed upon the walls "every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols" to which the knee has bowed, and the heart paid homage. (Ezekiel viii. 9-16.) What a revelation! Surely you know something of this, do you not? Can it be that you have lived all these years in ignorance of your real state before God—dwelling in a fool's paradise, imprisoned in an enchanted castle, where every object is intended to deceive till all hope and possibility of deliverance is past? What a surpassing mercy if even now you realize this before escape becomes impossible!

“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Here are terms that declare the universality of sin, and that its empire belts the globe. No marvel that verse 19 should tell of every mouth being stopped, and all the world becoming guilty before God. Mark well those words, “*every mouth,*” “*all the world.*”

What are we to understand by every mouth being stopped? Suppose someone had done you a grave wrong. You have in possession the clearest evidence of his guilt, so that there is no room for the slightest doubt. You confront the man, and charge him with the offence. Ignorant of the evidence you possess, he denies the charge, and solemnly protests his innocence. You draw from your pocket the incriminating letter, and say, “Read that.” What now? He answers nothing. His mouth is stopped.

And what about the whole world guilty before God? or, as the margin of your reference Bible reads, “Subject to the judgment of God.” What does that mean? Think of a criminal in a court of justice. His case has been gone into with the utmost care, and all that could be said in his defence has been laid before the judge and gentlemen of the jury. The latter retire to consider their verdict. They return and declare the prisoner at the bar *guilty*, and the unhappy man is perforce subject to the



judgment of the court. That is exactly how it stands with you.

Little as men may care to think about it, such is the position of all until forgiven and justified. "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is as true of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope of Rome as of the felon justly sentenced to penal servitude for life—*there is no difference*.

Can the endeavour to keep the commandments of the law, however honestly made, help a man in that condition? Not one whit. Many a goodly ship has been wrecked on the rocks of Sinai, though the danger signals sound and flash both night and day. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"—the *knowledge* of sin, dear reader, not salvation from it, not deliverance from its guilt and doom. (Rom. iii. 20.)

If this be so, then it is clear that all hope, if indeed there be any, must lie outside ourselves. No works of ours, religious or philanthropic, or both, can do away with the fact that we are guilty before God, or deliver us from the condemnation under which we already lie.

It is to men in these appalling circumstances that the gospel is sent, even the blessed news of the grace of God and of that great salvation open to all through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

For, strange yet sweet to say, the very God

against whom we have sinned, at whose judgment bar we stand condemned, before whose eyes is the clearest evidence of our guilt, has Himself thought of our deep, desperate need. This is most marvellous! What would satisfy the claims of His throne so that, in justifying the ungodly, His justice would remain untarnished none but Himself could tell. And when that was told, who could provide the ransom which Justice was bound to require if God was to be just as well as gracious? In this, too, we are shut up to God. And He has found a ransom, even His only begotten Son, who came forth to do the will of God. That will has been done. The empty cross, the vacant grave, the throne of the Majesty in the heavens filled—all these alike announce that everything has been accomplished. Salvation—full, free, and everlasting—is now proclaimed to men through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you ask, What, then, have I to do? Nothing but to own with uprightness of heart before God the guilty, ruined state in which you are, and to believe on, to trust in, the Lord Jesus, through whom His love has been made known and this great salvation brought about.

The remembrance of your many sins, if it distress you now, will not distress you then, though you will feel humbled that you should have ever committed them. The more you know of your sins the more you will know of the grace

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that has put them all away, and of the value of the precious blood of Christ, which enables God righteously to do so.

A kind friend undertakes to pay all my debts. I judge them to be about five hundred pounds, and think my friend most generous to relieve me of so great a burden. But further investigation shows my debts to be, not five hundred, but five thousand pounds, and yet my friend has paid them all! Then I see that his generosity is greater than I thought. I have a deeper sense of his goodness and of my obligation to him, and I love him all the more. (Luke vii. 41-43.)

Nowhere can the heart and conscience find rest save in the perfect love of God and in the perfect atonement that Christ has wrought. If you know that God loves you perfectly, in spite of your sins, and that He gave His only begotten Son to put those sins away for ever, so that He might rest in His love and rejoice over you with singing, you will not be afraid. (Zephaniah iii. 17.) "Perfect love casteth out fear"—not our love to Him, but His to us. (1 John iv. 18.)

And this is what God would have you believe.

Do you believe it? Can you say, "I know that in myself I am nothing but a poor sinner deserving judgment and wrath; but I know too that God loves me, that He gave Jesus to die for my sins, and in that love I rest"? Happy is he who can thus speak.

## STEEPING THE SEED.

TWO labourers in God's harvest met each other once upon a time, and they sat down to compare notes. One was a man of sorrowful spirit, and the other was joyous, for God had given him the desire of his heart. The sad brother said, "Friend, I cannot understand how it is that everything you do is sure to prosper. You scatter seed with both your hands very diligently, and it springs up plenteously, and so rapidly too that the reaper treads upon the heels of the sower. I have sown," said he, "as you have done, and I trust I have been diligent. The soil has been the same, for we have laboured side by side in the same town. The seed has been of the same quality, for I have taken mine where you have taken yours—from the common granary of Holy Scripture. But, alas! *my* seed never springs up. I sow it, and it is as if I sowed upon the waves. I never see a harvest. Here and there I have discovered, with great and diligent search, a sickly blade of wheat; but small is the reward of my labours." They talked long together, for the brother who was successful was one of a tender heart, and therefore he sought to comfort his mourning brother. They compared notes; they looked through all the rules of husbandry; but

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they could not solve the mystery, why one was successful and the other laboured in vain. At last one said to the other, "I must retire."

"Wherefore?" said the other.

"Why, this is the time," said he, "when I must go alone to steep my seed."

"Steep your seed?" said the other.

"Yes, my brother, I always steep my seed before I sow it. I steep it till it begins to swell and germinate, and I can almost see a green blade springing from it; and then, you know, it speedily grows after it is sown."

"Ah," said the other, "but I understand not what you mean! How do you steep your seed, and in what mysterious mixture?"

"Brother," said he, "it is a composition made of one part of the tears of agony for the souls of men, and the other part of drops of the cordial of confidence in God as the Hearer of prayer: this mixture, if you drop your seed in it, hath a transcendent efficacy to quicken the growth of every grain, so that none of it is lost." The other rose and went on his way, and forgot not what he had learned; for he too began to steep his seed, and he too saw a harvest, and the Lord was glorified in them twain.

Brethren, I do feel this with regard to myself; and, therefore, when I speak of others, I speak not uncharitably, that the reason of the non-success of many ministries will be found in restraining prayer.

SELECTED.

## THE TWO HEADSHIPS.

### BEING REMARKS ON ROMANS.

IT is helpful, and indeed we may say necessary, to a right understanding of this epistle, to notice the important divisions in its doctrinal part, closing with chapter xi.

These divisions are at verse 11 of chap. v. and at the end of chap. viii.

The first part treats of what we have done—our sins—and how God can and does righteously justify the believer in Jesus.

The second part of the epistle, beginning at chap. v. 12, takes up more especially the question of *what we are*, not what we have done; and it is to this that the following remarks chiefly apply.

In one sense what we are individually may be viewed as the result of what we have done; but in another sense it is clear that what we have done is the result of what we are, as possessing a sinful nature from which the evil in our acts and ways springs; for “a good tree *cannot* bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

The fruit is bad because the tree is bad, and if the tree be bad no good fruit *can be* produced by it.

It is an eventful moment in the history of a

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soul, when the fact is really discovered, that "in me, that is, in my flesh, good does not dwell." (Rom. vii.)

In chapter iii. the great point is that there is none that doeth good—"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." But yet there is often for a long time a clinging to the hope and expectation of some good being found within: that, though, alas! wrong things have been so manifest, yet there may be a possibility of cultivating and producing good. But when once the truth is accepted, that good does not exist, all hope is given up, for you can neither cultivate nor produce what is not there.

That good may be formed, by the grace of God, in us, is another matter; but never is it formed in "the flesh," or old evil nature; *that* always remains the same, and to "have no confidence" in it, is the true Christian position, as it is also the safeguard of the believer. (Phil. iii.)

The second part of the epistle—which we will now consider—treats of our state or condition, as being connected with Adam, and, through him, with a fallen race, possessing a nature contrary to God, and only capable of producing evil.

This is a humbling truth, but learning it prepares us for the reception of the blessing which God has brought in through the last Adam—the Lord Jesus Christ—for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

If the reader will now carefully look at the latter part of chap. v., he will see that the great point is, what has come in by Adam and what by Christ, and that just as we are associated before God, with one or the other, we are connected with what has been brought in by each. "Death reigned by one." "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation"—the whole race is thus under the power of sin and death, and subject to condemnation as connected with the first man. But *now*, blessed be God, grace reigns "through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." (The second Man.) All, too, who have received this "abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life" by Him. What a bright and blessed contrast!

But how are we to be freed from the condemnation of our state, and from the reign of sin as a power and principle of evil in us?

If our whole position as children of Adam be one of judgment, how are we to get deliverance from it? It is not now a question of forgiveness of sins, but of deliverance from our whole connection, as before God, with Adam, and from the power of sin.

Nothing but death could deliver us from this state. The death of Christ alone could effect this, and open a door of escape for us. He died in grace for us. The condemnation of all we were before



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God fell on Him, for He was "made sin for us." "He died *unto* sin once." He stood in the place of condemnation, in infinite grace to us, when He hung upon the cross. When we through grace believe in Him, we are so perfectly identified with Him before God, that what is true of Him is true of us as to sin, the law, judgment, and, we may add, the world.

Our baptism sets it forth. It is outward identification with Him. We are "buried with Him by baptism *unto death*." But it is faith which secures all the blessed results to us of His work—of His death—as regards the state and enjoyment of our *souls*, and our eternal acceptance before God.

We have died with Him, faith reckons; but He has died *unto sin*. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed *unto sin*, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This is the great theme of chap. vi. "Our old man *has been* crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that *has died* is freed [justified] from sin." We were servants, or slaves, of sin, *i.e.*, of the flesh—the principle and power of evil in us. Now believers are "made free" from sin, and are become servants of God and servants of righteousness. It is deliverance from the dominion of sin as a governing power in us.

The law could not help us. This is taken up in chapter vii. It was "weak through the flesh."

It demanded only what was right and good, but, alas! the flesh could only produce what was bad.

It was as though a master builder wanted to make a lifeboat, but when he came to the material to be wrought upon to form it, he found it thoroughly rotten—every plank and board unsound to the core. What could he do? He was powerless to produce the boat because of the condition of the wood of which it was proposed to make it. No fault could be found with the workman, but the attempt to make the boat fully demonstrated the uselessness of the material.

The law is the workman, man in the flesh the material, salvation the lifeboat.

The latter part of Romans vii. records the experience that leads to the discovery of all this. The former part of the chapter is doctrinal, showing that, as believers in Christ, we are “dead to the law by the body of Christ,” and consequently, as stated in chapter vi., we “are not under law, but under grace.” You may say, “Well; but if not under law, why not go on in sin?” The answer is simple—furnished by scripture—“How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

We are now seen before God “in Christ Jesus” (chap. viii. 1), where there is “no condemnation.”

The Spirit of God, moreover, is given to all who believe, to be *the power* of bringing forth fruit unto God. “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the

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Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." All must be real, however, before God, so "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is *none of His*." Where there is reality in the soul, and true faith in Christ, the Holy Ghost is given. He dwells in the body of the believer, and is the power of the new life, as also the "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Chapter viii. unfolds the blessed truth as to all this, shewing what the true Christian state or condition is; *first* declaring the blessed fact that in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation, this being the conclusion and summing up especially of what had been set forth in chapter v., which we have briefly considered.

Verse 2 gives the substance of chapter vi., verse 3 of chapter vii.

By prayerful meditation on these chapters the Christian reader will find a rich blessing in the unfolding of the grace of God to sinful man; *not only* in the perfect clearance from every charge, so that we can enjoy the blessedness of knowing that our sins are all gone from His sight for ever, but also in giving us a perfect acceptance and standing before Him in Christ Jesus, while at the same time the Holy Spirit is given and dwells in the true believer (the forgiven or justified person) to produce desires and ways corresponding to the blessed place and portion we have before God "in Christ Jesus."

S. M. A.

## FOR HIMSELF.

HOW feebly often the children of God enter into the true character of the Lord's call! Many believers go on for years without learning what He has called them for. What *I* have obtained, what *I* am, and what *I* shall have in the day of glory, absorbs the mind. What *Christ* has obtained, what *He* is, what *He* will have in the day of glory, seems never to enter their thoughts. "But *know* that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly *for Himself*." (Psalm iv. 3.)

The godly Man was Christ, who *walked* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *stood* in the way of sinners, nor *sat* in the seat of the scornful. (Psalm i.) His delight was in the will of God. The godly of to-day are those who, having passed from death unto life, follow in His blessed steps. It is His own sure work in our souls that has brought us into this blessed position and pathway.

When we consider the divine side of things as unfolded in the word of God in connection with His ways with His saints, *all is perfect*. Nothing takes place, as men speak, by chance. God's way with us is no after-thought. All was in His purpose, all is His own handiwork, all is for His own glory. "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also

glorified." (Rom. viii. 30.) This wonderful verse in Romans viii. is like a beautiful chain of four links, of which the two end ones are in the glory of God, and the other two rest on the earth. There is not a believer in the wide world that is outside the range of this lovely verse. If I look back into eternity I think of God, and see the glorious word "*predestinated*" (or marked out beforehand). If I think of the day when I was first turned to Him, "*called*" stands out in letters of light before me; if I think of my present position, I am filled with peace and joy as I rest on the blessed word "*justified*"; and if I look up again to yon bright scene where Christ is gone, and I am going, the eye of my faith is met by that wondrous word "*glorified*."

Called in time, we are set apart now by the Lord Himself from the world of the ungodly, that lies already under the judgment of God. We are brought to God in the purest grace, to which our only claim, if any, was the depth of our misery and woe. Ungodly, light and love from God broke in upon our souls. Then we found ourselves in the presence of the majesty of the unseen God. His infinite holiness filled our souls with terror, but His love was also there to meet and allay our guilty fears; love which had been manifested in the inestimable gift of His beloved Son, whose death warded off from us the fearful stroke of judgment we so richly deserved.

The fire of God had already been consumed by the sacrifice on the holy altar of God at Golgotha.

“Here we rest, in wonder viewing  
All our guilt on Jesus laid.”

Then it was that sweet peace filled our souls. The dreadful past was for ever gone, and the dreadful future—death, judgment, and the fiery lake were past and gone for ever too. Passed from death unto life, we belonged to God. His children, at home in His presence, in the blessed liberty of grace, He now sees His saints as the godly, whom He has set apart from the ungodly. Thousands have passed through this solemn and blessed experience.

But why has He set us apart? “Know that the Lord hath set apart Him that is godly *for Himself*.” We henceforth belong to Him; we are wholly His. He has redeemed us, we are the purchase of His own precious *blood*. We are no longer our own, but bought with a price. (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.) To do our own wills now, and to follow our own thoughts, is rank rebellion against the One whose love many waters could not quench, and who loved us even unto death. Soon He will have us *with Himself* in glory, and for this He waits with patience. (1 Thess. iv. 15–18; 2 Thess. iii. 5.) But already He has set apart His saints *for Himself*.

Ere He left this scene He prayed to His Father for His own, “Sanctify them through Thy truth :

Thy word is truth. . . . And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." (John xvii. 17-19.) Here we learn what it is that practically sanctifies, or sets apart, His loved ones according to the desire of His heart. And in Hebrews ii. 11 is set forth the further wondrous truth, that "both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

The love of Christ towards His people is perfect, unchanging, eternal. His interest in them is unceasing. Surely He is worthy of the richest portion. And the Lord's portion is His people. (Deut. xxxii. 9.) Marvellous grace to us! How deeply blessed and simple is the path of His saints when this is learnt. It fills the heart with peace and joy, and preserves from anxiety and care. We begin to experience somewhat of the blessedness of that communion which is our proper portion, and which was enjoyed without let by the blessed Lord Himself, *the* godly Man, as He walked upon the earth. And what joy for our souls to know, that the One who stooped so low to meet the depth of our need, who gave Himself for us on Calvary, has now a portion in which He can find joy for His heart. In a world where He received but a cross and a grave He has found a people, the fruit of His own grace, in whom He can take delight. With them He is

now occupied, working in them to will and do of His good pleasure. (Phil. ii. 13.)

God is bringing many sons to glory. Having made them meet for it, He is proving them in the wilderness that they may reflect Christ before men in all their ways. There is much in us all that is morally contrary to Him. He brings His word to bear upon our consciences, and exercises us that all leaven may be put away from all our borders. It is not the work of a day or a year; it is life-long; for the old nature we shall not be free from till the end of our earthly pilgrimage.

Christ draws us more closely to Himself with the bands of love, and weans our hearts from a world which is full of every lust. His still, small voice says to His saints, "*Come ye near unto Me.*" (Isaiah xlviii. 16.) This shows His delight in our company. It is there that His heart finds its satisfaction in this poor world. What a blessed place for His people! To pass on day by day through such a world, in the sweet and secret joy of His own presence is bliss indeed. Who can fathom the love that led Him to pass angels by, to take up the lost in a world of sin, to save them for His own glory, to bring them into His own presence, that they might find in Himself their eternal all! Moreover we are *His object* here and for ever. Daily does He lavish His love upon us, nurturing, ministering to, and sustaining us all the way through, till His heart of hearts shall



find its perfect satisfaction and eternal joy in His redeemed in glory. "He hath set apart him that is godly *for Himself*."

And He can brook no rival. The Lord is jealous over His people. He wants all our heart. If the world is harboured there, He must expel it. He bears with us long and patiently, but in His faithful love He deals with us, that we may let everything go that is contrary to His mind. His people are precious to Him. Satan will use every possible effort to beguile our hearts from Him, but the Lord's eye is always upon us, and His heart always occupied with us, His love unchanging till the end. The church has a constant and faithful lover in her heavenly Bridegroom. He loved us when we were part of a world filled with hatred to Him. It is His love that breaks us down. He calls us; He sets us apart. It is *for Himself*, and all the power of Satan, and all our weakness and failure, can never separate us from His love. (Rom. viii. 35-39.)

Would that all our hearts were drinking more deeply of such perfect love. The source is inexhaustible, but the vessels formed to receive it are only too often, as to their state, like broken cisterns which hold no water. May the One who so delights in His people use these feeble lines in His grace, to produce a greater response in our hearts to His wondrous love. The Lord gave Himself for us; He has set us apart for Himself;

## 50      HE SPAKE "NOT AS THE SCRIBES."

and He Himself is coming to fetch us. (1 Thess. iv. 16.) Now He would have us to be men of one object, walking daily with Himself till His triumphant shout shall call us home.

How can I ever, Lord, forget  
 Thy great, Thy wondrous love,  
 Thy love to me, when I in sin  
 Against Thy wooings strove—  
 Love without limit, end, or bound,  
 Both perfect and divine ;  
 Which flows from an eternal fount,  
 Beyond the age of time.  
 Love which in time its objects seeks  
 Itself to satisfy ;  
 Love that shall claim me for itself  
 To all eternity.

E. H. C.

He spake "not as the scribes."—No doubt *they* were remarkably correct in their addresses, and could tell you all about everything. They had *literal exactitude*—that would be most interesting and most intellectual ; but while *He* had that in a way beyond theirs, He had a power which always made the word of God to be the sword of the Spirit. In His hand its connection and its application were perfect. It always suited the occasion. It may have been resisted, and was so ; for both His words and Himself were rejected. But none the less they had to own that "never man spake like this Man." May we covet the grace that will make a difference between our mode of speaking and our usual *scribish* and powerless method. May we be not less literally exact, but more spiritually fresh and plain and vigorous, and, above all, far more *tender*.

J. W. S.

## THE SAVIOUR'S CALL.

“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.”

ISAIAH xlv. 22.

WHEN Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the Lord directed his attention to a well known incident in the history of the children of Israel. He said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”

As the bitten Israelite had to look to the serpent of brass, so now the sinner desiring salvation has to turn the eye of faith to Jesus, who upon the cross of Calvary endured the wrath of God due to our sins.

But where is Jesus now? When in lowly grace the Saviour visited this world, men with wicked hands nailed Him to the cross; but He is not upon the cross to-day. They took Him down from the cross and put Him into the tomb; but He is not in the tomb to-day. No, God, by His mighty power, raised Christ from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand, there to be a Prince and a Saviour. From that height of glory the Lord Jesus Christ sends forth this gracious message: “LOOK UNTO ME, AND BE YE SAVED, ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”

Now I would ask the reader's especial attention to this message. First, notice the expression, "ALL THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." If the ends of the earth are thus mentioned, we may be sure that there is not a person below the skies to whom this message is not addressed. Before the Lord ascended to heaven He gathered His disciples around Him, and said to them, "Preach the gospel to every creature."

But the expression, "All the ends of the earth," suggests to our mind the outcasts from society. A young man has, through dishonesty, lost his character, and having no reference to give, is unable to obtain a situation. The world looks coldly upon him; he is an outcast. Jesus does not despise such an one, but graciously cries, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

There is another who has fallen from the paths of virtue. If her relatives were to meet her in the street, they might pass her by without a word of recognition. But the Lord Jesus looks upon the fallen with an eye of pity, and says, with a voice of deep compassion, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Next I would have you ponder the words—"BE YE SAVED." What does this expression imply? It implies that the Lord Jesus sees we are in danger. During the dreary watches of the night a mother has been anxiously bending over

## THE SAVIOUR'S CALL.

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the cot, in which her child lies sick of a fever. In the morning the doctor comes, and seeing the child's critical condition, gravely shakes his head. The mother, looking up into the doctor's face, says, "Doctor, can't you save my child? Can't you save my darling boy?" Does not the mother's cry show that she believes her child to be *in danger*?

Look at yonder burning house. At the window of the topmost story stands a young girl beseeching the crowd below for aid. As we see the cruel flames rapidly approaching the window at which she stands, what is the thought that fills each heart? What is the cry that comes from each lip? "Can we save her? Can we save her?" What does this cry show? We believe she is *in danger*.

And, my reader, be sure of this, the Lord Jesus Christ would not say to the fallen sons and daughters of Adam, "Look unto Me, and *be ye saved*," if it were not that He sees we are *in danger*. Yes, if we have not fled to Christ for refuge we are in danger. We are in danger of the wrath of God; we are in danger of the lake of fire; we are in danger of eternal perdition; and, therefore, Jesus says, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

A reader may say, "I do indeed see that I am a sinner, and as such in danger of eternal punishment. Tell me, how am I to escape from the wrath to come?" Well, the Lord Jesus says,

"LOOK UNTO ME, and be ye saved." "Yes," you reply, "but my difficulty is that I do not understand what is meant by 'look unto Me.' What is it to look at Jesus?" A Christian, who was asked this question, tried to make the matter clear to the questioner by the following illustration.

"Suppose," said he, "your rent will be due in a fortnight. You well know that when the rent day has arrived you will not have a penny with which to pay your debt. Naturally you grow very anxious, and your careworn countenance bespeaks a heart ill at ease. A gentleman calls upon you, and noticing your depression, says, 'Tell me, my friend, what is it that ails you?' 'Well,' you reply, 'I do not like to mention my troubles to others; but as you have asked me, I will explain matters. In two weeks' time my rent falls due, and I am certain that I shall not be able to pay it. My landlord is not a man to be trifled with, and I fear he will turn me out of the house.' 'Oh,' says the gentleman, 'do not give yourself any more anxiety about the money. Look to me for the rent.' Would you have any difficulty in understanding his meaning? No; you would think, Surely he would not say, 'Look to me for the rent,' unless he meant to pay it."

And, dear reader, Jesus would not say to helpless sinners, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved," unless He meant to save those that look to Him. *Do you suppose the Lord Jesus would raise expecta-*

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*tions in a sinner's heart only to disappoint them?* Far be the thought. Christ says, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Rest in child-like confidence upon His word.

The heaven above our heads shall be rolled up as a scroll, the earth upon which we tread shall flee away, and no place be found for it; but the word of Christ shall never pass away. Though your sins be more in number than the grains of sand upon the sea-shore, His word to you is, "*Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*"

C. H.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. P. 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 29.—Some of the obscurity in which this passage seems to be involved passes away when it is seen that from verse 20 to 28 inclusive there is a parenthesis, these verses being complete in themselves. Accordingly verse 29 follows verse 19, and forms part of the argument in hand. There were some among the Corinthian Christians who said there was no resurrection of the dead. Many serious things were connected with the denial of the resurrection; among them this, that they who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished, and those who lived were of all men most miserable. Why then should any be baptized for the dead? Why should they stand in the place where the dead had lately stood? Why fill up the ranks that had been thinned by the hand of persecution? If the dead rise not—if death here ends every thing—why place yourself in jeopardy every hour? Better far to say to one another, "Let us eat and drink;

for to-morrow we die." This then is how we understand the phrase, "Baptized for the dead." It is our becoming a Christian with the fact distinctly in view that others had laid down their lives for Christ's sake, and we take their place and are ready to surrender ours likewise. But why all this if the dead rise not, if we have no hopes that lie in another sphere where death can never enter?

F. F. C., LIVERPOOL. ROMANS xiv. 21.—In view of the wide-spread evil of intemperance, with the desolation, misery, and crime that so often dogs its steps, we think this passage would amply justify a Christian in abstaining from strong drink. We could not, however, speak of it as a law under which every Christian is placed. It is rather a matter for the individual conscience, but "happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

THE LORD'S SUPPER.—According to Acts xx. 7, it would appear that in primitive times the Lord's Supper was partaken of in the after part of the day, at least such we are at liberty to infer was the practice at Troas. But we are not aware of any definite instruction on the subject in the Scriptures that would make it obligatory to partake of it only in the evening of the Lord's-day. Such a rule would exclude from this precious privilege many of the aged and infirm, who are obliged to remain at home at the close of the day. 1 Cor. xi. 33 leads us to infer that it should be at an hour most convenient for all. Is it not so?

A SCATTERED ONE.—We thank you for your letter and encouraging remarks. In all you say we heartily concur, and should you be disposed to write to us again, we shall be glad to hear from you.



## THE LORD'S SECOND COMING.

**H**AVE you ever given a stray thought to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Sometimes it has been spoken of as a subject of no practical use, and only fit for idle minds to speculate about. But that way of looking at the matter is exceedingly irreverent, to say the least of it. Surely no truth, much less one holding so conspicuous a place as this in the pages of Holy Scripture, should be treated in so cavalier a fashion. It is a great mistake, involving serious spiritual loss; for the expectation of the Lord's return stirs up the holiest affections of the soul, powerfully influences the Christian's life, and ever urges him forward in the path of earnest and laborious service for Christ.

Many of us in old days, if we ever thought of the matter at all, had the idea that Christ would come at the end of the world, that the dead both good and bad would then be raised, the Last Judgment begin, and the eternal state of all be determined according to their works. It would be hard to say how such an idea ever came to be floated. Certainly the Scriptures lend no support to it.

In speaking then of the Lord's coming, let it be

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understood that I am not referring to the end of the world, nor even to His coming in judgment, though the hour shall yet dawn when He will take in hand that very solemn work. For it is written, that God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." (Acts xvii. 31.) The very day for that momentous event is thus seen to be fixed in the calendar of heaven, and the Judge appointed, who, when He comes to begin that dread assize, shall be attended by His mighty angels, and be clothed in flaming fire. The issue of that judgment is also declared in awe-inspiring terms—vengeance and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord—in view of which men might well quake, and their hearts fail them for fear. (2 Thess. i. 7, 9.)

But I turn away from a theme so grave and sad, for assuredly the appearing of Christ in these connections is not the Church's hope. It is included in the testimony we have to bear; for He commanded us, says Peter, "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." (Acts x. 42.) That side then of God's message must not be held back if we would be faithful witnesses. Judgment however, strictly speaking, has nothing to say to the Church. She

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is the Bride of the Lamb, the object of Christ's profoundest love, and for her He gave Himself. How then should she ever be called into judgment? Moreover, He Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and exhausted the wrath due to them. Surely that great and glorious atonement shelters the individual believer, and answers every charge that could be laid at his door. And if it be said that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, still it is both clear and certain that when the saint stands there, washed from his sins in the Saviour's precious blood, it will not be to answer for the sins for which Jesus Himself has answered. He will stand there to hear the Lord's unerring judgment on his pathway here, and to receive from His hand some gracious token of His approbation in reference to anything, however small, that he might have done or suffered for His name's sake while on earth. It will repay the reader to refer, if possible, before proceeding further, to Mark ix. 41, 2 Timothy iv. 8, Revelation ii. 17.

The coming of the Lord of which we speak is distinct from and precedes all this. It is set before us, in 1 Thess. iv. 16-18, in these words: "For 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 in the

clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Consider for a moment the passage we have just quoted. Here the personal descent of the Lord is declared. He comes from heaven, but *not* to earth. With archangel's voice and trump of God He comes, and the dead in Christ rise first. That almighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself is displayed in calling out of their graves *the dead in Christ*. Then the living ones—all believers—shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and shall be for ever with Him.

What an astonishing statement! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and the far off islands of the Pacific, bereft, in a moment of time, of every living person who has faith in Christ! Nowhere in any part of the wide earth will a single saint be found! Draw the circle narrower, that you may realize the truth the more. Do you chance to live in London, Edinburgh, or New York? You shall not find at that hour, among the teeming population of those great cities, one solitary individual who has come under the shelter of the precious blood. All will be gone—all of them shall have been caught up to meet the Lord. Impossible, you say. Nay, for with God nothing is impossible. "Enoch was translated that he should not see death," and Elijah passed up in a chariot of fire, and the same power that caught

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them away shall catch the Church away when the hour comes.

When the Church is thus translated to heaven, the Spirit of God will begin to act on others according to the counsels of God. Let politicians talk as they may about the Eastern question, the Jew must go back to his ancient land, and the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be fulfilled. Then too shall those who have deliberately refused the gospel and the truth of God be given over to believe a lie. (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.) But I confine myself now to that which awaits the Christian—the Church's hope—even the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself, that we may be for ever with Him.

It has been often remarked that the coming of the Lord is spoken of in every chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians. In alluding to their conversion, the apostle Paul tells us how they turned to God from idols *to serve* the living and true God; and *to wait* for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, our Deliverer from coming wrath. (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) Had you lived in those days in the city of Thessalonica, and had asked any of Paul's converts what they were looking for, you would have been told that they were expecting the Son of God from heaven. They may not have been able to tell you much about it, but for that one great event they looked. Details, about which they needed

light, are found in chapter iv., and are recorded there for our instruction as well as for theirs. And these details are prefaced in the most solemn way by the words, "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord."

Does the same hope animate us to-day? Are we really living in the expectation of the Lord's return? Probably many of our readers, perhaps most of them, hold fast to the Lord's coming as a truth of Scripture. It is quite possible to do this without the heart being in an expectant state. The mind may be greatly enlightened, and the affections remain all the while perfectly dormant. But do you long to see the Saviour's face? Do you mourn His absence? Such questions humble us, for we are conscious of our shortcomings in this respect. Yet, if we were more with Him in spirit—eating Him and living by Him, as it is put in John vi. 57—we certainly should more earnestly desire to be with Him above. Any lack on this side is indicative of the low state of our spiritual affections, enfeebled and benumbed as, alas! they often are by the want of communion with Christ.

And if we believe the Lord may come at any moment to call "His own" away, how earnestly shall we labour for the salvation of others, knowing that the same event that shall consummate our happiness will seal the doom of the Christ-rejecter. They shall be given over to believe a

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lie. Little do the unsaved, who live in lands where the Bible is circulated, and the gospel freely preached, reflect on the fearful goal towards which they are hurrying by leaps and bounds. But *we* know it, and *we* believe that the Master of the house ere long will rise and shut to the door. (Luke xiii. 25.) Oh that our hearts may be rightly balanced in view of these approaching events! On the one hand may we be able to say, out of the fulness of our hearts, "Come, Lord Jesus;" and, on the other, in earnest, beseeching accents, call on men to come and take the water of life freely. (Revelation xxii. 17.)

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## A LETTER TO A YOUNG CONVERT.

MY DEAR —,—I quoted in our conversation this evening a verse from Hebrews, which may perhaps perplex you: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. ix. 27.) Now this is true as far as unconverted men are concerned; for the believer in the Lord Jesus, however, judgment is already past.

But as the question of judgment is so misunderstood, and the popular idea is that of a general judgment at the end of the world, I would seek to show you the truth concerning it from Scripture, where there are four different judgments spoken of.

1st. When on Calvary's cross Jesus was bearing all God's judgment against sin, *He* was made "sin for *us*, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21); and "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for [on account of] sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (Romans viii. 3.) Thus during those terrible hours of darkness on the cross God was visiting upon His blessed Son, as our Substitute, all His holy wrath and judgment, so that He can now say, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, *hath* everlasting life, and *shall not* come into judgment; but *is passed* from death unto life." (John v. 24.) For the believer, therefore, judgment against sin is for ever past.

Now when a person believes in Christ to the salvation of his soul he becomes a child of God, and commences a pathway which should be altogether to His glory. Consequently that path will be reviewed, for we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, as stated in 2 Cor. v. 10. This is the second judgment spoken of. As regards believers, this judgment will not be to determine their destiny for heaven or hell. *That* was settled for us when we believed in Jesus as our Saviour, who by *His work* fitted us perfectly for heaven. All our history as Christians, however, will come out before Him, so that our loss may be apparent in not having wholly followed



His guidance, and every secret thing will be made manifest. No uneasiness will therefore be felt in the glory, as to anything coming out which is not already known to Him. Everything is known, but then all will be clearly seen and judged in His presence. This a Christian should seek *now*, confessing, and judging all his ways and actions, and walking in the conscious enjoyment of His love. *Then* we shall be in bodies of glory like His own, and He that sits upon the judgment-seat is the One that died for us—our Saviour. This judgment takes place after the Lord has come *for* His saints, and before His coming *with* them, to judge the nations then alive on the earth.

The third judgment spoken of is in Matthew xxv. 31–46. Here, if you read carefully, you will see that it takes place on the earth, and that all nations shall be gathered before Him. These are they who shall have heard the proclamation of the *gospel of the kingdom* (not the gospel of the grace of God preached in the present dispensation)—the announcement that Christ was coming to set up His kingdom. According to the manner they receive the message and the messengers, so will they be set on the right hand or on the left of the King, either as sheep or as goats. After this follows the millennial reign of Christ, the saints of the heavenly places reigning with Him, and those saved from the third judgment enjoying His beneficent reign on *earth*. At the expiration of

the thousand years Satan is loosed from the prison where he was bound, and stirs up the nations to make war against the beloved city Jerusalem, and the saints inhabiting it, and God deals with these nations by sending down fire out of heaven and devouring them, &c. (Rev. xx. 7-10.)

The fourth judgment is then introduced—the earth and the heavens flee away, and the dead, small and great, are raised up, and appear before the great white throne. The One on the throne judges them out of the books which are opened, and those whose names are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. xx. 11-15.)

If we go by Holy Scripture, how erroneous then is the thought that at the end of the world there is to be a general judgment, when Paul and all the redeemed shall be judged as to whether their destination for eternity is to be heaven or hell. No, my dear ——, Scripture in no wise sanctions the idea. On the contrary it gives to believers *now* the assurance, that as certainly as Christ has entered into the glory of God, so those who have trusted in Him have passed for ever from death unto life, and will be for ever with Him in that bright and happy scene, where nothing that defiles can enter. “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.”

Let not your young mind be warped by any of the thoughts prevalent in the world, that anything

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short of this is God's purpose for His redeemed ones. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." (Galatians v. 1.) Grace, and grace alone, has been the reason of this, and no merits of yours whatever can add to, or detract from, what sovereign grace gives, and that in perfect righteousness. Hold fast to this, and should you discover (as you surely will) the workings of your own evil heart, remember the blessed Lord never changes, but is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Hebrews xiii. 8.) Trust Him through all. Your salvation rests on His work, which can never be overturned, and He is pledged to carry you right through. Should you come across scriptures which seem to contradict this, wait upon Him to make known to you their true solution; and remember that the profession of Christianity is taken up by many, but by some only outwardly, with no divine work within, and Scripture warns such.

Your responsibility to walk as Christ walked, is in no wise weakened by the blessed fact that grace super-abounds. It is by grace you stand, and whilst your reward in the kingdom depends on your degree of faithfulness to Him, your place in heaven is as eternally fixed as though you were there already.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. H. C.

## LAUGHTER.

HAVE you ever seen a gipsy's fire just set alight? How the thorns crackle right merrily! But how transient is the crackling as the fire settles down soberly to the task of making the pot boil! This is a homely illustration of king Solomon's beautiful metaphor respecting the

## : LAUGHTER OF FOLLY.

He says, "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool."

Mark it is the laughter of *the fool*.

Say, stout-hearted infidel, does the term "fool" apply to you? You say there is no God. What saith the Scripture? "*The fool* hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm xiv. 1.) The scoffing laugh and infidelity go together. Have a care. That laugh is the laugh of a downright fool. For see, the thorns crackle but to be consumed. The infidel laughs on the brink of a burning hell. What folly! His intellect *may* proudly persuade him to thoroughly disbelieve in such a place; but, nevertheless, his unbelief does not alter the fact one bit. Said an infidel to me the other day, "My existence is the most profound mystery to me. Why I exist I know not. I am an agnostic. All is dark." Infidelity

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only takes the candle of the word of God out of the hand of its votaries and leaves them in the dark. Infidel, thou art drifting down to hell. Thou hast to meet God, and thou canst not brow-beat *Him*. There will be no laughter in hell.

Say, prosperous, hard-headed business man, does the term "fool" apply to you? The Bible speaks of a certain rich farmer. His hard work and his care, combined with God's bountiful hand in providence, had brought him a handsome competency. His barns were bursting with his goods. He will build larger. He will house his riches safely. He will say to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Such were his communings within himself. All men spoke well of him.

But that night God spake to him. "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Go he must, leave his hard-earned wealth just when about to enjoy it! Yes! No lease could he take of his life. His laugh of good-tempered, sleek satisfaction was but the laugh of a downright fool. He forgot God, and great was his eternal loss.

Oh! ye infidels, ye business men, ye pleasure-seekers, ye who make a mock at sin, ye mere professors—oilless lampholders—none but Christians have the right to be merry. You think

they are melancholy and long-faced. You mistake. They have everything to make them happy. As for you, death and judgment lie athwart your path. Listen! "A sword is sharpened, and also furbished; it is sharpened to make a sore slaughter: it is furbished that it may glitter: SHOULD WE THEN MAKE MIRTH?" (Ezekiel xxi. 9, 10.)

Let the laughter of folly die away on your lips, and let the cry of anxiety come bursting from your heart, "What must I do to be saved?" *Do!* Prayers and tears, and alms-giving and sacrament-taking, and Bible-reading and good works, will never do. There is no atonement in these things. The *divine* answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." *Is that too good to be true, think you?* Well, carry your mind back. You remember that beautiful, patriarchal scene long ago on the plains of Mamre.

God, graciously disguised, partakes of the hospitality of the aged Abraham. He tells him he shall have a son—a son of promise. Sarah, hearing this in her tent, laughs the

#### LAUGH OF UNBELIEF.

God heard that laugh, and said, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Sarah, judging on mere natural grounds, thought it an impossibility for her to dandle the child of her old age—to see

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him grow into a stalwart man, to be the stay of her weakness and the light of her eyes. So she laughed that laugh of unbelief. Something like you, when you read God's offer of pardon and salvation to everyone who simply believes on the Lord Jesus, and then believe it is presumptuous for anyone to say he is saved. Friend, do not consult your own thoughts, but God's word. It says to you, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.)

But see how differently Abraham acted. God made a covenant of blessing with him, and told him he would bless him with this child of promise. "Thou shalt call his name Isaac [laughter]: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." As he heard the promises of God he laughed within himself, and said in his heart, "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" How quickly he gives his wife her new name—not Sarai, but Sarah, a princess. ("She shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her," said God.) His laugh was the

## LAUGH OF FAITH.

His faith shone. He believed God. The promises were great, but the Promiser was greater. His faith was tested, for the promise was not fulfilled for several years. But he waited

in quiet confidence, for he knew that nothing was too hard for the Lord. Have you learnt this lesson, dear, doubting one?

The apostle Paul uses, in his own masterly way, this incident. He says, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 20-22.) How simple and beautiful!

But stay, read on. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; *but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, IF WE BELIEVE ON HIM that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Look away then from yourself and your own thoughts, and believe God. Christ has died. Atonement has been made. And now, through simple faith in Jesus, the Saviour in glory, God will give you salvation, forgiveness, justification, peace. Once more, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.)

A. J. P.

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## THE WASHING OF WATER.

“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.”—JOHN xiii. 10.

WE must remember that here it is a question of water, not of blood, however necessary the blood of the Saviour be. It is a question of purity, not of expiation. Note, in the next place, that the Scripture uses two words here which must not be confounded; one means to wash the whole body, to bathe; the other to wash the hands, the feet, or anything small. The water itself, employed here or elsewhere as a figure, signifies purification by the Word, applied according to the power of the Spirit. One is “born of water,” then the whole body is washed; there is purification of the thoughts and actions by means of an object which forms and governs the heart. These are the divine thoughts in Christ, the life and character of the new man, the reception of Christ by the Word. Christ had the words of eternal life; this was expressed and communicated in His words, where grace acted, for they were spirit and life. The disciples had received these words, except the one who should betray Him. But although they were thus washed, converted, purified in reality, by the Lord’s words, yet they

were going to walk in a defiled world, where they could indeed defile their feet. Now this defilement does not suit God's house, and the love of the Lord does what is needed that the remedy should be soon applied, if they contracted defilement which shut them out. Ready to do everything that they might be blessed, Jesus washes their feet. This action was the service of a slave in those countries, where it was the first and constant expression of hospitality, and of the attentive care it claimed. (See Genesis xviii. 4; Luke vii. 44.)

With this washing of the feet is connected the truth that conversion is not repeated. Once the Word has been applied by the power of the Holy Ghost, this work is done, and it can never be undone, any more than the sprinkling of blood can be repeated or renewed. But if I sin I defile my feet, my communion with God is interrupted. Then the Saviour occupies Himself with me, in His love.

It will be well to notice here the difference that there is between the Priest and the Advocate. In practice the difference is important. Both offices have to do with intercession, but the Advocate is for sins that have been committed; the Priest is there that we may not sin, and that goodness may be in exercise in respect of our weakness. I speak of the Priesthood in heaven. Upon the cross Jesus was Priest and Victim.

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In Leviticus xvi. 21 the priest *represented* all the people, confessing their sins on the goat's head. This was indeed the work of the priest, but not properly a priestly act; and, as I have just said, the priest acted there as the representative of all the people, these latter being looked upon as guilty. This work is accomplished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, made once for all. By His one offering He has perfected for ever those that are sanctified, so that we have no more conscience of sins. (Hebrews x.) But Christ intercedes for us in order that we may obtain mercy, and that we may find grace in time of need; so that in our weakness we may be the objects of God's goodness, and that we may not sin. The Advocate intercedes, when we have sinned, to re-establish the interrupted communion, for it is a question of communion in 1 John i. Righteousness and propitiation remain always perfect, and form the basis of that which is done for us when we have failed. (1 John ii. 1, 2.) The effect of this grace in Christ is, that the Spirit applies the Word (the water in figure), humbles us in convincing us of sin, and brings us near to God. The red heifer of Numbers xix. is a very instructive development of this renewing of communion. Notice here that the Advocate does His work in order that we may be cleansed, not when we have been; also, we do not go to Him that He may do it. It is He who takes the

initiative in grace, as He did for Peter, that His disciple's faith might not fail when He should be obliged to leave him to himself for a moment, that he should make experience of his weakness.

The washing of the feet is therefore a service with which Christ is now occupied for us. When by our negligence (for there never is a necessity that we should do it) we have defiled our feet, and we have made ourselves unfit to enter spiritually into the presence of God, Christ purifies us by the Word, so that communion may be re-established between our souls and God. It is a question of our walk down here essentially. When the priest amongst the Jews was consecrated his body was washed, then he washed his feet and hands at the time of the accomplishment of each service. Here it is only the feet that had to be washed. It is no longer a service of work that is in question, but our walk down here.

The Lord gives what He had just been doing as an example of humility; but the spiritual intelligence of what He had done would only come when the Holy Ghost had been given. Still, we are called, in this sense also, to wash one another's feet, to apply the Word in grace to the conscience of a brother who needs it, and in the humility of which Christ has given the example. But the teaching refers to what Christ is doing for us on high, remaining ever our Servant in grace.

J. N. D.

## BLIND BARTIMÆUS :

OR, THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

MARK X. 46-52.

THE case of blind Bartimæus is a most instructive one. His simple but earnest faith might shame many believers of the present day, day, whose advantages have been so much greater than his. The very moment that he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he ceased not to call upon Him for help till his prayer was responded to. Jesus "stood still, and commanded him to be called," and he, "casting away his garment, sprang up, and came to Jesus." (Revised Version.)

It is interesting to observe that this poor blind beggar does not adopt the name by which our Lord was designated by the unbelieving crowd. He calls on Him by His royal name—"Son of David," not Jesus of Nazareth; thus owning Him King and Messiah of His people Israel. Bartimæus, though himself an Israelite, and entitled to the "children's bread," only asks for "mercy." He demands nothing, but takes the place of an unworthy sinner. Our gracious Saviour could not resist such an appeal as this. In the conscious possession of Almighty power

He asks what he wills that He should do for him, and at once his prayer is answered. That glorious Person who "commanded the light to shine out of darkness" opens those sightless eyes to the light of day.

In this little narrative there are several features of practical interest to ourselves.

1. There was great need and earnest desire for relief. Blindness is a great affliction; there are few greater, especially to a person of active and sensitive mind. "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Believers form no exception to this law of man's existence on earth. In fact, they have special trials of their own, though they have also special comforts. But however earnestly desiring relief under trial, do we not often seek to bear it ourselves, instead of obeying that word which bids us cast our burden upon the Lord? Thus we lose the relief and the blessing that He is so able and willing to bestow.

2. To have our needs met, and our desires even for spiritual blessings satisfied, there must be an approach to the only Source of power in the universe. We must obey His command, and we shall find His gracious promise fulfilled. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." (James iv. 8.) This blind Bartimæus assuredly did, for God was there in the person of the Son.

In old time Jehovah had spoken from mount Sinai, and said to Moses, "Go down, charge the

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people, lest they break through unto the Lord to gaze, and *many of them perish.*" Under the law, too, none but the High Priest was permitted to enter into the immediate presence of God within the veil, and he only once a year, on the great day of atonement. But in Bartimæus we see holy boldness and its acceptance. What a contrast was this!

3. There must not only be real need and earnest desire and a drawing near to God for help, but also the faith that counts on a favourable answer to our petitions. "For he that cometh to God must believe" not only "that He is," but "that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews xi. 6.)

This was clearly so in the case of blind Bartimæus. The more the bystanders rebuked him the more a great deal he cried "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The Lord Himself bears witness to his faith, saying, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." But now the Lord's way was his way, for it is recorded that he "followed Jesus in the way." (v. 52.)

The strong faith of this poor blind Israelite stands in striking contrast with the little faith of the saints of Jerusalem. So feeble was their expectation of the Lord's gracious answer to their unceasing prayers on behalf of His imprisoned servant that they charged the messenger with madness who "constantly affirmed" that Peter,

for whom they prayed, was even then standing before the gate. (Acts xii. 5, 15.)

The apostle James, however, gives us an example of a higher order of prayer than that upon which we have been dwelling. Bartimæus offered the prayer of faith, and was fully answered; but what he asked for was his own deliverance and blessing. In the "effectual, fervent prayer" of the prophet Elijah his own advantage had no share. (James v. 16-18.) What he prayed for was for the glory of God alone. The answer was certain to bring trial and danger to himself.

Before concluding I would make a remark on Philippians iv. 6, 7. Here, though we are exhorted "in everything" to offer "prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" to God, yet there is no promise that our petitions will be granted. But the richest blessing that even God Himself can bestow upon us whilst tenanted these mortal bodies is assured—even that His own peace, "which passeth all understanding, shall keep [guard] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

We see this promise fulfilled in the apostle Paul, who thrice besought the Lord to take from him the thorn in the flesh. Now, though his petition was denied, he received a much richer blessing than he had sought or expected. (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.)

A similar principle is exemplified in the



## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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history of Moses, whose earnest request to *enter* the promised land was refused, but instead thereof the Lord Himself presented a bird's-eye view of the whole region to his enraptured gaze. (Deut. iii. 26, 27.)

“Oh Thou, by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way ;  
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod,  
Lord, teach us how to pray.”

J. H. S.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MINNIE.—The reading of your letter carried our thoughts back to the serpent's word in Genesis iii. 1 : “Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” He would tempt Eve to her ruin, and wilily began by suggesting a doubt as to God having spoken thus. Gaining Eve's ear, he advanced another step, and boldly and blasphemously said, “Ye shall not surely die.” Eve listened, reasoned, distrusted God, and believing the serpent's lie, fell. So you see the stratagem he is employing against you is far from new.

When a witness comes into court to give evidence, he is usually examined to see whether or not his testimony is worthy of credit. What sort of character does he bear who sometimes comes as an angel of light and sometimes as a roaring lion? Let the Lord Jesus Himself answer. “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh

of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John viii. 44.) No one in his senses would believe anything coming from such a source as that. Owing to the fall, the sons and daughters of Adam have inherited an evil heart, ever ready to endorse the lying words of that malignant foe. "Deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," is the judgment of God concerning it, and the Lord has told us that out of it proceed, among other things, *false witness* and blasphemies. (Matt. xv. 19.) Forewarned is to be forearmed. Knowing the origin of these thoughts that oppose themselves against God, it is our wisdom not to parley with them, but to judge and reject them the moment they arise.

You must learn to follow the example which the Lord Jesus has set us in dealing with the tempter. In the hour of His trial He answered not in His own words, perfect as they would have been, but met every artifice of the devil with an "*It is written.*" In Him there was no avenue open to Satan's insinuations. "By the word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalm xvii. 4.)

This fierce onslaught of the enemy will yet be made, by God's grace, to yield life-long blessing. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." God may use this attack as a means of teaching you more of your own weakness, and of the meaning of those words, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good." It is quite possible that you have never fully faced the fact of your being a guilty, lost sinner in the sight of God. You may have never seen that your ruin was so great that nothing less than

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the Son of God giving Himself for you could redeem you from eternal judgment, and that nothing but grace that has no limits could pardon and bless sinners such as you and all of us were. Besides there is the learning by experience what you are as of Adam. Oh, what distress the young convert often feels on finding the flesh still in him—the evil principle of sin which nothing can ever better! How he hates it, and longs to be free from its cruel bondage; and the more he struggles to free himself, the more conscious he becomes that the meshes of the net are too strong for him to break. Then in his anguish he groans, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” and learns that there is deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans vii. 24, 25.)

For not only were our sins judged in His cross and death, and sin in the flesh condemned, but our old man has been crucified with Him. The old I is no longer I. (Galatians ii. 20.) There is another I, a new I. And if we are alive to God, it is no longer as of Adam, but in Jesus Christ our Lord who, as risen from the dead, is Head of a new race. To that race the Christian belongs.

You are right in resting upon the Word, but see to it that in believing it you believe God whose word it is. We fear there are many who perhaps can truly say they believe the Bible, who have never *believed God*. They have not risen in their thoughts from the Bible to the God of the Bible—they believe the book, but not the God of the book. Now if you receive a letter communicating important news, you believe not merely the letter, but the friend who wrote it. So should it be

with us. Then the living God becomes the object of faith. We believe Him whose words of life and peace are inscribed on the pages of that blessed book. In the one instance the book is before us, in the other God Himself, and the difference is great.

We trust ere these words meet your eye the snare will have been broken. If not, we shall be very glad to receive a further line from you.

ALL THINGS IN ORDER.—Unless there are very peculiar circumstances connected with the case, about which we know nothing, we should decidedly regard the matter as exceedingly irregular.

ANXIOUS ENQUIRER.—We deeply regret to have to ask you to wait till our next issue for an answer to your letter. The questions you raise are most important, and if God permit they shall be answered in our next to the best of our ability.

B.—It is of moment to distinguish between the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart and conscience of an unsaved sinner and His personal indwelling. These things are often confounded but they are wholly distinct. Ephesians i. 13 clearly shews this. If he be convicted of sin, if he be drawn to God by the cords of love, if his soul rest by faith on the atoning blood of Christ—all this is surely the result of the Holy Spirit's work. But though the indwelling of the Spirit immediately follows, it is not the same thing. The body of the unbeliever is never the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is in believing the gospel of our salvation that we are sealed, not before.

## STUMBLING-BLOCKS REMOVED.

*(Being an answer to a Correspondent.)*

**"I fear I am a professor, and that there is no hope for me."**

Yes, there is hope, blessed be God! though your religious profession may have been but a thing of the lip—leaves, leaves, leaves, nothing but leaves. Mercy's door is open still, even to professors who are not possessors, only they must be content to throw away their borrowed plumes, and enter, crying, "God be merciful to me *the sinner*."

Listen to the wonderful words of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." These are gracious words indeed, and worthy of being printed in letters of gold. Read them again, read them slowly, moments cannot be better spent. And if "all sins" may be forgiven, why not yours? "*All sins*" certainly include the sins of deluded professors, in whose religious life there has never been an atom of sincerity. Now we do not believe you are one of these; but if you were, and are now repentant, we would say to you, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from *all sin*." Let the mask of an unreal profession be taken away, and we see a sinner, wretched, and miserable, and

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poor, and blind, and naked. To all such Jesus expressly says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." (Rev. iii. 18.) Now, all this is to be bought without money and without price.

**"I used to be bright after hearing the gospel preached, but the brightness would soon go."**

Very likely. Numbers can tell the same story. Not being over-wise, they lend their ear to a certain *Mr. Feelings*, instead of heeding what God says in that blessed book called the Bible.

Now that gentleman is a very old acquaintance, and having had considerable experience, he pronounces his opinions in a very plausible manner, and palms them off as truth, though in fact they are but lying inventions. If they follow such a will-o'-the-wisp, is it any wonder that they find themselves sinking in the bog of despair?

This is how it is: On Sunday they hearken to the gospel, and it yields them light and comfort. By the middle of the week the light goes, and comfort flees away. Forthwith they fall into their doubting state again, and long for the coming Sunday, hoping for fresh relief. While listening to the gospel their thoughts are engaged with the gracious Saviour. His dying for sinners passes before their eyes, together with the love

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of God to perishing men, and for the moment they forget themselves. Would that they always did so! But soon, too soon, Christ is forgotten, the word of the truth of the gospel fades from the memory, feelings change, and doubt and darkness prevail once more. Thus unbelief triumphs, and Satan achieves a further victory. But, dear friend, did that which was true on Sunday cease to be true on Tuesday or Wednesday? Has all that altered with your altered feelings? Assuredly not. But if what you are fills the vision of your soul instead of what Christ is, if your feelings take the place of *the Spirit's testimony, in the Word*, to the value of the atoning blood, no wonder you despair. The wonder would be if you did not.

**"Have I come to God in the right way?"**

The right way to come to God is to come just as you are. Were you without dispute the wickedest sinner upon earth I would bid you go to God as such. Tell Him that your heart is a sink of iniquity, a cage of every unclean bird. Tell Him that your life has been a hideous sham, and that no one merited more than you His eternal wrath. That is the right way to go to God. But go through the one only Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. So full is that ransom that the blackest sinner this side of hell need not despair. Never since time

began has anyone perished who has thus come to God.

**“Have I repented enough?”**

This is an old question, and proceeds from a mistaken view of what repentance is, and from the misleading thought that there is some virtue in it. Repentance is not mere sorrow for sin, though that element may not be wanting. It is the soul's judgment of itself before God, the deep conviction inwrought by the Holy Spirit of its ruined state, leading the individual to take sides with God against himself. But most important as this is, there is no virtue in it to atone for sin.

Repentance will not save the sinner, though there be no salvation without it. Were your repentance of the profoundest kind, and your sorrow for sin such as few on earth had ever known, it would avail nothing in the putting away of your sins. All right in its proper place; but your salvation is due to the favour of God alone, and to the infinitely precious blood of Christ.

**“Is it for me?”**

Why ask such a question? Is there anything in the Bible, from cover to cover, to lead any sinner to think that the blessings of the gospel are not for him? “Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah lv. 1.) “Look unto Me, and be ye saved,



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*all the ends of the earth.*" (Isaiah xlv. 22.) "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." (Romans x. 12, 13.) What gracious words are here. What an answer to your question too. Oh, doubt not Him who speaks! Believe Him, for it is impossible that He should lie.

**"I am vile and perfectly helpless."**

Thank God that you say so. There is no mistake here. You *are* vile and helpless. How slow some are in learning this, and how distressed when they find it out! The experience of forty long chapters had to be gone through ere Job was willing to confess the truth of it. Then he did. "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further." (Job xl. 4.) Long had he struggled against this conviction, but now he could resist no more. "*I am* vile" was the heart-broken utterance of this outwardly good man. Brought face to face with God in a way that he had never been before, we hear him say, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyes seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job xlii. 4, 5.) The struggle was ended then, the storm was stilled, and the night that had grown so dark gave place to a morning without

clouds. So may it be with you. So will it be if you understand and mix with faith the words of the inspired apostle in Romans v. 6, "For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the *ungodly*."

**"Have I believed aright? If not, can I now?"**

Of course you can. But, as far as we know, there are not two ways of believing anything. Your great concern should be, not How do you believe? but, What and Whom do you believe? Do you believe the truth? and is it God whom you believe? Those are the important points. Now, when the truth is received as truth it always leads to action, if action be called for, and such action is styled "*the obedience of faith*." Ah! you do not understand me. Let me borrow an illustration from Exodus ix. 20, 21 that might make my meaning plain. Moses predicts the plague of hail; grievous hail; hail mingled with fire, such as had not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof; death upon all that should be found in the field! To what did this announcement lead? Listen! "He that feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses." There we see the obedience of faith; *that was believing aright*. On the other hand, "he that regarded not the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field." And this shows exactly what it is to believe with the

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heart, for the marginal reading of verse 21 is, "He that set not his heart unto the word of the Lord left his servants and his cattle in the field." It is believing with the heart interested in the thing believed. *Let God be believed*, and the one who believes Him cannot help being affected by what God says.

**"I just looked and saw Jesus dying on the tree. Is that believing?"**

I cannot say that it is. The dead lamb in the courtyard of the Israelites would have sheltered none. The blood must be sprinkled on lintel and doorpost. A hungry man is none the better for looking all the day long at a dish of meat. Seeing Jesus dying on the cross will bring no relief; seeing Him dying there *for me* will. Faith says "He was wounded for *my* transgressions, bruised for *my* iniquities; the chastisement of *my* peace was upon Him, and by His stripes *I* am healed." Believing in Jesus is believing what God says about Him; how that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. (Rom. iv. 25.) If in your deep need you trust Him with your soul, if you flee to Him as the manslayer fled to the city of refuge, if you look to Him as the serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the serpent of brass, if, in short, you receive Him as your Saviour, then you do indeed believe. All the untold blessings of the gospel are yours, and the only thing necessary to

the enjoyment of them is to believe God's testimony concerning this. Read carefully John v. 24 and Acts xiii. 38, 39, and remember those words are God's.

**"I don't feel quite so miserable just now. Is that a sign that God is giving me up?"**

See how you are looking within and forming your judgment of how God views you by what you find there. You fain would gather comfort from your misery, and when your misery grows less the devil scares you into an agony by suggesting that God is giving you up. Thus you are more miserable when you are less miserable, and are thrown into greater anguish of heart when your anguish is not so great as it sometimes is! This is naught but self-occupation, and as long as it lasts you will have to drink the cup of wormwood and gall. Oh, turn from self to Christ, and you shall be fed with honey out of the rock—even the smitten Rock—and with the finest of wheat! Come, bury thy sorrow in the wounds of Calvary. Lay thy aching head on the bosom of the One who loves thee so tenderly. Rest there, thou weary one. Jesus bids thee come, and waits with outstretched arms to welcome thee.

**"I want to feel more love to God and care for His interests."**

No doubt you do. But your heart must learn to rest in the love of God to you, and not in yours

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to Him. Could you love God as none had ever loved Him, and care for His interests as few had ever done, it would not yield the rest you crave. Marvel not at this. For were there one on earth whom you loved with all your heart, and for whose sake you were ready to surrender all you had, you would have no peace unless you knew you were loved in return. Indeed, the more you loved that individual the more exquisite your misery, were you uncertain of his love to you. Now our love to God grows by our entering into His love to us. And if you ask how that is to be brought about, I answer, By your simply believing with all your heart in the reality of that love as it is revealed in Holy Scripture. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans v. 7, 8.) Such is the witness of the Word. Shall we hold back from believing it until our feelings confirm its testimony?

**"What are the marks of the Father's drawing?"**

Suppose I could describe these to you, you would at once begin to search your own heart to find them there, and if your search satisfied you, then you would take comfort. But comfort must come from what you find in God's heart, not from what may be found in your own. This is only self in another form. Besides,

whatever marks of the Spirit's work there may be these are never the resting-place for faith. It is the old mistake of putting the Spirit's operations in place of the sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit too would lead your thoughts to Christ. His constant cry is, "Behold the Lamb of God." It is impossible that you should have abiding peace in watching for the Spirit's work in your soul. "It is *the blood* that maketh an atonement for the soul," and you must put nothing in the place of the blood. The blood has been shed, the ransom has been given, the life has been laid down, the Lamb has been slain, all has been done, and God is satisfied. The Sin-bearer has been raised from the dead, bearing no longer the sins He bore upon Calvary. He has been taken up into heaven, and is now in the cloudless favour of God, and we are in Him there "accepted in the Beloved." To these things the Spirit bears witness, and the Father Himself says, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him." Surely the great mark of the Father's drawing is that you come to Jesus, and rest and rejoice in the wondrous sacrifice which He has offered for guilty men.

**"I thought if God was working with me I should not have wicked thoughts, and I find myself full of iniquity."**

Ah ! but when a person is born again he does not lose his sinful nature. The principle of sin

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still abides though he be born of God. It is true that a new principle is there, a new life with its corresponding nature, but the old still remains, nor is it changed either by the communication of the new or by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now it often happens that when anyone is born again Satan endeavours to stir up the old nature to unusual activity. It is like a volcano that has long slumbered, but which begins to show renewed signs of vigour, and belches forth afresh its smoke and fire. And this is all the more distressing, because the new nature in one born of God loves holiness and hates sin. How we gain power against the old nature, or "the flesh," I do not here enlarge upon; but were your thoughts never wicked, and every impulse of your whole being in harmony with God's holiness, that would not be any ground of confidence as to your soul's safety. Your holiness, however great, cannot blot out your sins, neither can it furnish a reason why God should forgive you and justify you from them. To think otherwise is (i.) to lose sight of the blood of Jesus, (ii.) to forget that it is by grace that any are saved, (iii.) to conclude that you are all right by what you find within. Three very serious mistakes indeed.

And now, having answered your questions, let me beseech you with all my heart to look away from yourself. You will find no good there. Think of the love of God to you even when

you were dead in sins. In you there was nothing to excite His love, nothing but sin and enmity against Him. Yet He loved you notwithstanding all, and gave His only begotten Son that you, believing in Him, should have eternal life. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." No change in you can change that love. It cannot be shaken by the storms and whirlwinds of the soul; firm as the everlasting hills it stands. There rest, there let your ship cast anchor, and it shall outride every gale. Think much of the sufferings of Christ, betake thyself oft to Calvary that thou mayest catch a sight of the Sin-bearer. See Him forsaken of God, that you might never be. Then look up and behold Him in heaven, in the glory of God. Of old He had your sins upon Him, now He is in glory without them, for they have been for ever put away. The once-forsaken One is now, in God's eternal favour, the Object (oh how worthy!) of His everlasting delight! And the believer is "in Christ," sharing, as in Him, in all that favour which rests on Him supremely. Do not doubt this. Make much too of the Word. God speaks to you in it, sending many a message of grace and peace. How much better is it to believe what He says, than to have your thoughts formed by your fitful feelings and fluctuating experiences. Farewell! May the God of peace give you peace—deep, solid, eternal. Such is our prayer for you.



## “JEHOVAH LOOSETH THE PRISONERS.”

### (A DAY-DREAM.)

IN my day-dream I thought that some angelic warder was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison, and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me, ever and anon as I looked sorrowful, that “Jehovah looseth the prisoners.”

### The Cell of Ignorance.

What was seen in the first cell called *the common prison*, in the second called *the solitary cell*, and in the third called *the silent cell*, we have not space to say. But when we reached the fourth the door opened and shut behind me, and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! 'Twas dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black-hole called *the cell of ignorance*. I groped as a blind man gropeth for the wall. I was guided by sobs and moans to a spot where there knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light; but I marvelled that this place should be darker than the rest, only I recollected to have read of some that sat “in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and

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iron." I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced they never could afford light *to him*. I felt for one of the ancient lightholes, but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness; I touched it with my hand, and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the great doctrines of grace which had greatly perplexed him; it was called *Election*. He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine; but since God had chosen His people, and he felt persuaded that He had not chosen *him*, he was lost for ever, since, if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window, and pulled out some handfuls of rags—filthy, rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening—caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of divine sovereignty. As I pulled out these rags light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, "It is a mercy for thee that there is such a doctrine as election; for if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for thee; salvation must either be by God's will or by man's merit; if it were by man's merit, thou wouldest never be saved; but since it is by God's will, and He will

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have mercy on whom He will have mercy, there is no reason why He should not have mercy on thee, even though thou mayest be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile He bids thee believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and gives thee His divine word for it, that him that cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out.” The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called *The Fall; or, Human Depravity*. The man said, “Oh, there is no hope for me, for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceeding vile; there is no hope for me.” I pulled the rags out of that window too, and I said to him, “Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty.” He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through, and seen my Master’s glory by its means; it was the doctrine of *Particular Redemption*. “Ah,” said he, “suppose Christ has not redeemed me with His precious blood! Suppose He never bought me with His death!” I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskilful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, “cleanseth us from all sin.” “Ah!” he

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said, "but suppose I am not one of the *us*?" I told him that he that believeth and trusteth Christ is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved. I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence; but a ransom which did redeem all believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them; that the truth had been misrepresented to him, and that he had heard the doctrines of grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else he had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened and the man could see, he saw written over the door, "Believe and live!" and in the new light which he had found he trusted his Lord and Saviour, and walked out free, and marvelled that he had been so long a slave.

**The hard-labour room.**

I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons, where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labour for them. In the prison I went to see in my reverie there was a *hard-labour room*. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people; they held their heads very high, and would not

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bend; they were birds with fine feathers, and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined; but, being in durance vile, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty. They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could by-and-by set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing, and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a tread-wheel; they were going to the stars they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might; but though they had been labouring for years, and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies. Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs; they were turning wheels, and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing they wrought on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company laboured to build houses of sand, and when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded, but they renewed their efforts, for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavouring to make wedding garments out of fig-leaves, by sewing

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them together, but the fig-leaves were of a sort that shrivelled every night, so that they had to begin again the next morning their hopeless toil. Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well, the veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords, while they worked amain without result. As they laboured, like Samson when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thonged whip called *the Law*, the terrible law—each lash being a commandment, and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners; yet still they kept on work, work, work, and would not turn to the door of grace to find escape. I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels called ceremonies; and there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted I thought they would die, but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more, and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit; then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a shining spirit, and carried out of the prison and made free for ever. Then I thought within myself, "Surely, surely, these are proud,

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self-righteous persons who will not submit to be saved by grace, ‘therefore He brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help; then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.’” I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison-house to bring them to Jesus; yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words, “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”; and to those other words, “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

**The Devil’s Torture Chamber.**

I am getting to the end of this dark story now; but tarry a moment at the grating of *the Devil’s torture chamber*, for I have been in it; yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream. I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* if you would understand what I mean; The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God, the truth of Scripture, the manhood of Christ, then His deity; and once, he

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says, tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah! I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the most high God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down, and cried to the merciful God that He would save me from them. Oh! the foul things which the fiend will inject into the spirit; the awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den, which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts in such hosts, and so quickly the one after the other, that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle; and though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah! well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those; for if we hate them they are none of ours; if we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan's, and God will in due time bring us to be free from these horrors. Though the hosts of hell may have ridden over our heads, yet let us cry, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise." Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. "*It is written*"—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Give your foe a deadly stab; tell him that God



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is, and “that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner, and the Lord Himself must loose these prisoners.

**The Condemned Cell.**

Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined therein have called *the condemned cell*. I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself, he feels absolutely sure the wrath of God abideth on him, he wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up, he is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness, he marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame. His spirit is in a dreadful state; he not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now. The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the putting-up of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the law as piece after piece was put together. It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big

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bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away for ever. Oh, that condemned cell! Next to Tophet there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience he shall never be condemned. When he is brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out, but not to execution; led out, but not to perish; he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, so does God deal with poor souls; when they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God's sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain. It is then that sovereign mercy steps in and cries, "I have blotted out, like a cloud, thine iniquities, and like a thick cloud thy sins. Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee."

SELECTED.

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## “WATCH WEEL.”

WHEN on a visit to a friend at Melrose, we were taken, for the purpose of tract distribution, a drive to Abbotsford. I was there shown round Dryburgh Abbey by a good Scotchman of more than ordinary intelligence, who was in charge of the place, and who escorted me to the tomb of Sir Walter Scott, the noted writer. On the face of a large stone in the old abbey wall, just above this tomb, is to be seen the words heading this paper—“Watch weel”—quite alone, and deeply engraven in large irregular-shaped ancient letters.

Generally speaking we all of course know what this short sentence means (which, in English, is “Watch well”); but curiosity rather led me to ask our guide why it was so conspicuously placed in such a public spot. He explained that it had no connection whatever with Sir Walter, as it was there long before that eminent gentleman was born; but that it was a motto adopted by the nobility and other extensive landed proprietors during the “Border Wars” of Scotland, centuries ago. These people, he told me, agreed to use it as a watch-word against their enemies, who were ever expected to invade their territory; and that this watch-word was intended to be always upper-

most in their minds, to guard them against the possibility of surprise.

Thanking my informant for his courtesy, I remarked to him that I considered the motto an exceedingly wise one in its generation, and that if people could "watch weel" lest their worst enemy should catch them unawares, surely others should not watch less for the coming of their best Friend. For instance, God's people should constantly have it in their hearts to "watch weel" for their Lord, who at any moment may come from God's right hand where He now is, to take them from this world of sin, sorrow, warfare, enemies, and death, to a heaven of holiness, joy, peace, light, and eternal glory with Himself, our best Friend. This obviously touching a chord in the good man's soul led him to exclaim, "Yes, *that's* the Person *I* am watching for." "But," I rejoined, "Do I understand you really to mean that you are watching for the Lord Jesus from heaven, as knowing Him to be your Saviour, Sin-bearer, and best Friend?" "I am," said he with emphasis and joy; "but I am afraid that I am not watching quite so *weel* as I ought."

Our time being up, and after mutual encouragement to "watch weel" for the blessed One who *will* come and will not tarry, we wished each other farewell

"Till the hour of our receiving  
Promised joys with *Him*."

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Now, dear Christian reader, is there nothing to help us in all this? You will remember that in the very last chapter of God's eternal word the Lord Jesus says, three times over, “*I come quickly!*” Then, if our hearts miss Him as being in touch with and set upon Him, how this “watch weel” will correspondingly suit us. If people of the world, feeling their position of danger, are wise enough to use such a watch-word, should *we* fall short of it? They watched to keep great trouble away, but it is our privilege to watch for fulness of joy to come. “And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John iii. 3.) Our longing for the Lord's return should not arise so much from a desire to be relieved from trying circumstances in which He gives grace to sustain as from a wish to be in the company of Him who has loved us, and given Himself for us. We may be quite sure that He who still loves us, and is so deeply interested in us, will not rest satisfied till He has all His own in the full unhindered joy of His own blessed presence for ever.

Conscious knowledge of this necessitates *patience* to keep us back, so to speak, from those pleasures, rather than wishing to be clear of the trials in the midst of which it is our privilege to glorify God. Christ alone knows fully the joy set before Him and us, and He now waits in the perfection of patience for it. May our hearts

be directed more into this patient waiting for Christ—watching well for His sure return.

“When faith and hope shall cease, and love abide alone.”

But should any readers scan these lines who are still strangers to the blessed heavenly hope, and are fearing the Son of man's coming to judgment, which He surely will do for souls found without God and without hope in the world, we will just quote one or two Scriptures for their encouragement.

“The Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to *watch*. “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrow-ing, or in the morning: lest coming *suddenly* he find you *sleeping*. And what I say unto you, I say unto *all*, WATCH!” (Mark xiii. 34–37.) “Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The *morning* cometh, and also the NIGHT; if ye will enquire, *enquire* ye: RETURN, COME!” (Isaiah xxi. 11, 12.)

“O sinner, ere it be too late,  
Flee thou to mercy's open gate,  
And join Christ's waiting band.  
'Trim your lamps and be ready'  
Is the midnight cry.”

J. N.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. L.—See a small pamphlet *Fallen from Grace*, price twopence, published at the office of this magazine. The subject was also dealt with somewhat fully in our October issue. We will see whether a further paper on the same topic can be inserted before long.

ANXIOUS INQUIRER.—“Stumbling Blocks Removed” in the present number is an answer to your letter.

T. M.—The judgment of the Gentile nations in Matthew xxv. will take place *before* the setting up of Christ’s millennial kingdom. The judgment of Gog and Magog in Revelation xx. 8 is *after* the thousand years are expired. Those about whom you ask will be born in millennial days.

A. E. S. (Romans vii. 14, 17.)—Is not the apostle here describing the spiritual nature of the law, that it deals not alone with external conduct, but with the thoughts and intents of the heart? The law set in motion the very things which it forbade. Mark, I do say it produced them; for, alas! they were already there, but it, so to speak, provoked them. This leads to the discovery that “I am carnal, sold under sin”—a slave to an evil master. But, having been born again, there is a new I whose instincts and desires are necessarily holy. Only at the point to which these verses bring us there is no power on the part of the new I to overcome the will of the old I. The individual is, however, able to distinguish between the I of the renewed man and sin that dwells in him. The latter is no longer I, for its doings I hate, and the conviction is forced upon me that in me (that is in my flesh) good does not dwell, and, therefore, it is vain to look for it there. But the finding out of this causes intense anguish if delivering grace is not known, and gives rise to the cry, “O wretched man that I am! who

shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Deliver myself I cannot, hence the cry for a deliverer. Is there not one for me? Thank God there is. (v. 25.) For "sin in the flesh" has been condemned by God in the cross and death of His Son. (viii. 3.) To that condemnation I agree with my whole heart, for the condemned thing I hate, and to my great joy I learn that I am now "in Christ," risen beyond death and judgment, and the Spirit being given I am no longer "in the flesh, but in the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 9.) It is thus we are set "free from the law of sin and death."

STROUD. (Romans xi. 5.)—We believe that *now*, even as then, there is a remnant according to the election of grace, that is, there are some from among the unbelieving and apostate nation of Israel who, through divine grace, believe in the rejected Messiah. Of course all such are incorporated into the church and form part of it. There is no warrant, as far as we know, for supposing the existence now of a Jewish remnant who have been born again, and in whose hearts the Spirit of God begets hopes of earthly blessing such as restored Israel will have by-and-by as distinct from the heavenly hopes of the church of God. If an Israelite is now converted he of course becomes a Christian, and shares in the blessings which Christianity confers.

T. W. (2 Corinthians v. 8.)—This passage, as also Philippians i. 23, clearly indicates that when a believer is absent from the body he is present with the Lord. His body, it is true, is laid in the grave to be raised again at the coming of the Lord, and it is to that event 1 Thess. iv. 16 refers. The spirit dies not with the death of the body, but though the immediate happiness of those who have "fallen asleep through Jesus" is assured, yet do they wait for the resurrection state for the perfecting of their joy. "Hades" simply means the region of departed spirits.



## FOR EVER SAVED.

*(Being an answer to a Correspondent.)*

WE do not wonder at your being unable to explain off-hand all the texts brought forward by your friend to overthrow the great Scripture doctrine of eternal salvation. But were you able to show their meaning and to convince the objector that your explanations were correct, it would still leave much to be accomplished ere his heart found the abiding rest which you enjoy.

Those who wage war against the everlasting security of the believer in Christ, and think there is a possibility of his ultimately perishing, need a clearer knowledge of the great truths that shine around the cross and empty grave of the Son of God. By all means do your best to answer their objections, and to convince them that the passages they produce mean not what *they* allege. But do not stop there. Patiently and perseveringly lay before them the atoning work of the Lord Jesus in all its breadth and fulness. Point to His glorious resurrection as the emphatic testimony on God's part that the sins which Christ bore have been answered for to His satisfaction. Declare the meaning of those words, "When He

had *by Himself* purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Tell them that the work on which our salvation rests is done—for ever done—and you will find as these truths become better known the *seemingly* antagonistic texts will cease to be misused.

Although the question has been often handled in these columns, let us look at it again. First, in relation to the believer's sins. How have they been dealt with? "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24); "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.) "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. xv. 3.) Now, here we are distinctly told that Christ has borne our sins, suffered for them, died for them. This is the plain testimony of the word of God. If, then, a poor sinner concerned about his soul believes on the Son of God, I would like to know how many of that man's sins were borne by his Saviour. All of them, or only a part? Suppose you had that man's history before your eyes from his earliest childhood to his dying day, suppose you could mark out with the utmost exactitude every sin of every sort that he had been guilty of, I then would ask, Did the Saviour suffer for *all* these sins—every one of them? He did beyond doubt. What, then, has become of them? Is God satisfied in respect of them?

Can they ever be laid to that individual's charge? Weigh those three questions, and decide what answer they should have.

It is a fact full of consolation that our sins have been imputed to the Saviour, who stood as our Substitute upon the cross. There is a beautiful figure of this in *Leviticus xvi.* in connection with the scapegoat. Picture that scene if you can. See the high priest on that solemn day standing in the presence of the assembled worshippers; see him lay his hands on the head of the goat, and in impressive accents confess over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Israel and *all* their transgressions in *all* their sins, putting them on the head of the goat. That being accomplished, behold it sent away into the wilderness by the hand of the appointed man, bearing upon it, as we are told, all their iniquities into a land not inhabited. There shines, in type, the glorious truth of substitution. We see, in picture, our sins imputed to Another, and He bearing them away to a land from whence they shall never more return.

Let us withdraw our eyes from that imposing piece of Jewish ritual, and fix them on another object more awe-inspiring still. We turn from the shadow to gaze upon the substance. Behold the Lamb of God! See Him upon the cross, dying, the Just for the unjust. Meditate for a moment on His mysterious sufferings. Think of

God laying our sins on Him. Hearken to His mournful cry, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Ah, my soul, thou art lost in dumb wonder at this amazing sight! No marvel, for it shall be a matter of wonderment throughout eternity.

But perhaps some inquirer asks, Did not Christ die for everyone? Yes, in one very blessed sense He did. He gave Himself a ransom for all, and tasted death for every man. What we have been speaking of, however, is Christ as a *Substitute*, and nowhere in Scripture is He said to have been a Substitute for all, otherwise there would be no judgment for any, for how shall Christ judge those whose Substitute He Himself has been? It could not be. And it is this loose and unscriptural way of speaking of the sufferings and substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus that hinders many from enjoying peace with God. *The great truth of substitution is only for believers, for those who through grace have faith in the blood of Jesus.* Does this in any way limit the freeness of the gospel? Not in the least. For though we are not empowered to place our hand on the shoulder of the first man we chance to meet, and say to him, "Dear sir, Christ was your Substitute on the cross, and bore the judgment due to your sins there, if you but believe it," yet we are entitled to tell any and every poor sinner on earth that such is the value of the blood of Jesus

in God's sight, that if he believes in Him God will justify him from all his sins, make him His child, and fit him to share His home with His beloved Son for ever. Blessed news this for every creature under the wide heavens.

It will help us if we refer for an instant to Hebrews x. 14: "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." How do those words "*perfected for ever*" agree with the theory that one who is saved to-day may yet be lost eternally? Can one who is *perfected for ever*, ever come under the judgment and wrath of God? Let those who say so explain how such an one could have ever been *perfected for ever*. And, mark, this perfection that can never be impaired flows from the one perfect sacrificial offering of Christ. If that offering can lose its value so that Christ shall be obliged to die again, then, and not before, the perfection in which we stand shall pass away. The perfect sacrifice and the perfect place in which it sets those for whom it was offered stand or fall together.

In order that we might have unwavering assurance as to all this, the Holy Ghost witnesses to us that our sins and iniquities God will remember no more. (Hebrews x. 17.) Is not this witness borne to every believer? Who shall deny it? Now if we say that a saved person may yet be lost, we are confronted at once with this difficulty—Here is one concerning whom the

Holy Ghost witnesses that God will remember his sins no more, and yet after all there is the possibility that He will remember them and judge him for them too! Who shall reconcile these opposing things? No one can. If we are wise we shall hold fast to the witness of the Spirit, and throw overboard every notion contrary to it. Surely the witness of the Holy Ghost, expressed in those nine words, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," is worthy of credit. Why should any in their feverish anxiety to uphold mere human opinions be so bold as to make God a liar?

The sayings of the Lord Jesus moreover are exceedingly explicit. In John x. 27-30 it is 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, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." In reference to the life He gives, mark the qualifying adjective—it is *eternal* life. How can it be eternal if it is liable to be blown out like a candle or fade like the flowers of the field? Observe, too, that the Lord says His sheep "shall never perish." Now we all know the meaning of that good old Saxon word "*Never*." If terms mean anything, this means that the safety of the sheep of Christ is for evermore secured. In His hand He holds

them, who shall pluck them thence? In His Father's hand they are, who shall compel Him to give them up? Kept by the power of God, they shall all of them appear before Him in those blest abodes, where He who is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. Blessed be God for that!

We know it is sometimes urged that the doctrine for which we contend would make Christians careless about their walk. Such fears are groundless, however natural they appear. Is there no other incentive to a holy life than the dread of being for ever lost? Is there no such thing as faith which works by love? Besides, the believer, being born of God, has a new nature which delights in what is divine. The Holy Spirit too dwells in him to give him the present knowledge of those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him and which are now revealed unto us by the same Spirit. (1 Cor. ii. 9-16.) Of course, prayer, feeding on the Word, watchfulness, and other things besides, have their place, and cannot be too assiduously cultivated. But the settled assurance of eternal salvation, together with the conviction that God purposes to have us in glory with Him, and in the image of His beloved Son, so far from making us indifferent to holiness, will be found in practice to have the very opposite effect.

## OUR LORD'S TEMPTATION.

MATTHEW iv.

THIS scene stands quite alone. It cannot be classed along, or placed in comparison, with any other.

We find the blessed Son of God before us in all the moral perfection of manhood. It is correct to say of man, that he lives, moves, and has his being in God, that the highest glory of man as a creature is absolute dependence on, and obedience to, that God by whom he was created. Aught else is sin and alienation.

But here we see the absolute dependence of the Son of man on "every word" that God had spoken. His life, *as man*, His every movement, was assuredly in that God in whom He had His being. He presents to us man as he should have been in relation to God.

The scene is laid, however, in the wilderness; and what is that? How comes there to be such a place as a wilderness? Is that the normal idea, the proper or natural abode of man? Certainly not.

The garden of Eden, in the wealth of its provision, was the home of man. That garden knew no lack, no desert existed within its charming domain. All that nature could desire was abundantly supplied, and God Himself deigned to enter its precincts. A wilderness then was unknown



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But, alas! the serpent entered, plied his wily snares, and first the woman, deceived thereby, sinned and fell, quickly to be followed by the man.

Then all was changed. The fair garden, or rather God's holy presence there, could no longer be endured—nor indeed might sinners remain within—and God drove them out.

If outside the garden, where could man be but in the wilderness?

The earth, devoid of God's presence, is a wilderness, and that is Satan's sphere. It is there man is now placed, and though he may endeavour to alter its character, and to close his eyes to the fact of God's absence, it is a wilderness still. No amount of human embellishments, no resources of science, no achievements of skill, no medical relief, no philosophic sentiments, can undo the awful facts that God is not here, and that the earth is therefore a wilderness. Mercy may kindly remember, and cause the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and thus in a thousand ways tell of a God of long-suffering pity. Still sin has turned the earth into a wilderness.

Now the blessed Lord was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, into the domain of Satan's special power, into the very stronghold of the enemy.

It was there—the exact locality is not told—He met the foe on his own ground. Forty days of fasting were succeeded by hunger. There is nothing sinful in that. Man even as to his bodily

wants is dependent on God's supply, and that moment of need was chosen for the first assault.

"*If thou be the Son of God command that these stones be made bread,*" said the enemy.

Through and beyond the veil of manhood Satan perceived that He to whom he thus spoke was the Son of God. He was man, but infinitely more. Hence he suggested to Him to *command* these stones to be made bread. Had the Son of God so commanded He would have taken Himself out of the state of absolute dependence for direction which marks perfect manhood. He, and He alone, was in that condition.

Hence His beautiful rejoinder, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" That is the becoming attitude of *man*.

When we test ourselves by this standard what constant failure we must own. What a contrast are we to Him. As *man* He had no *word* to transform the stone to bread, and therefore He refused to act; and what a wonderful thought it is that He who had power to do so would not relieve His need without a direct Scripture for so doing. We, alas! often infringe Scripture to satisfy our wants. He would not break His fast without Scriptural permission; and to Him "*every word*" of Scripture was the word of God. Foiled in this first and most open assault, Satan conducts the Lord to the holy city, and sets Him on a

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pinnacle of the temple. Proof against "*the lust of the flesh*," would He yield to "*the pride of life*"?

To do exploits and make ourselves a name is pleasing to us, for we naturally love self-exaltation, but in this case such a feeling was unknown.

To cast Himself from the pinnacle, even when Scripture seemed to provide for such a contingency, would have been a mere tempting of God, and would not have been a step in what are called in the psalm from which Satan quotes *His ways*. Those ways were ways of dependence; this would have been one of presumption. The man of dependence does not tempt God. Such was Jesus, and again the enemy is foiled. But not yet hopeless of conquest, he takes the Lord to a high mountain, and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, saying, "*All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me!*" "*Worship me.*" That was the aim of the enemy. "All these things" for unfaithfulness to God! "It is written," said the Lord, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Here the foe showed his hand. He sought the worship that is due to God alone. The perfect Man, again quoting the Scriptures, gave the final stroke, saying as well, "Get thee hence, Satan." "Then the devil leaveth Him." He is defeated by One who had assumed manhood, and who used no other weapon than the word of God.

Perhaps nowhere does the perfection of manhood shine so brightly as in the temptation. For Satan to cope with Godhead were folly, but here is a *Man*, one too who was "an hungred," and who in His conflict did not resort to means beyond the reach of any. He simply quoted the written word of God, and that sufficed. Here was a *Man* perfectly controlled by the Word, and for such an one Satan was no match. The strong man was bound by the *stronger*.

True it is that the difference between us and this blessed Victor is illimitable; for He in any circumstance was never less than God, whilst we can be but men, and sinful; but as children of God, through faith in His Son, we too are dependent on Him, and have the same precious Word for our counsellor and weapon. As it is to us the first, so will it be the second. In proportion as we are controlled by it, so are its effects outwardly. In communion with God we need never be beaten. God will authenticate and make good His word even in feeble hands like ours. Infidelity will not leave the field through mere argumentation, nor will Satan be defeated by logic. No, the word of God held in living communion with Him is the all-sufficient weapon for this difficult day.

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," said the victorious Master. May we follow humbly but faithfully in His wondrous footsteps.

J. W. S.

## REMEMBER !

**T**HERE are some words that stand out on the page of inspiration with great distinctness, and arrest the attention of the reader. The word chosen as the title of this paper is one of these. There are six passages in which the word 'remember' occurs, to which I would like to call attention, and may the Holy Spirit of God bless the perusal of them to our souls.

### **The Remember of Youth.**

In Ecclesiastes xii. 1 we find the first. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." This may be called the "*remember*" of youth. God is addressing Himself to the young, and exhorting them to remember Him, their Creator, in the days of their youth.

It is a sad thing to see them grow up, pass into manhood and on to old age, unconverted. No sight can be more sorrowful than that of an old man tottering on the brink of the grave with a lifetime of unforgiven sins upon his soul, the crowning sin of all being the rejection of the Son of God as Saviour and Lord.

An aged man, who was shortly to pass from time into eternity, once said to the writer, "It

seems an awfully mean thing that I who have served the devil all the days of my life, and am a mental and physical wreck, unable to serve the Lord at all, should now turn to Him to be saved." I assured him that it was all of pure grace that anyone was saved.

But, my young friend, think of what God says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Do not wait until you have become old in sin, and have worn yourself out in the service of Satan ; but *now*, while you are young and full of vigour, recognise His claims upon you, turn in repentance to Him. Let Jesus, the Son of God, who died for sinful men, be your only trust, and being saved, let your youth, manhood, and old age be for Him, who is so worthy of our all.

An officer, mortally wounded in his throat, had just time to say before he died, "*I have forgotten my Maker.*"

Beloved reader, *you* are called to "remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth." It is the "remember" of youth. Do so, I entreat you.

### **The Remember of Warning.**

In Luke xvii. 32 we get the "*remember*" of *warning*. "Remember Lot's wife." It is a verse of three words, but full of the deepest and most solemn meaning. Lot was a righteous man, a saint of God, though in a wrong place. The iniquity of Sodom was so great that it brought

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down the judgment of God upon it. Lot's wife, though connected by the closest natural tie to a saint of God, was not a saint herself. Her heart was in Sodom; her affections clung to the scene about to be desolated by the judgment of God, and when they were bidden to flee to the mountain for safety, to stay not in all the plain, nor to look behind them, she looked back, and became a pillar of salt. That fatal look! It indicated a heart that longed for, and was satisfied with, what was so loathsome to God, and was about to meet His judgment. The other three—Lot and his two daughters—swept on through the plain up to the mountain, and were safe.

Dear reader, are you, as it were, a Lot's wife? Are you attached outwardly to the people of God, connected with some meeting, some denomination, while your heart is in the world that is so soon to be overtaken by the judgment of God? Outwardly connected with those who are not of the world, but are sheltered by the blood of Christ from its judgment, you yourself have no part therein. What more solemn, and what more self-deceiving!

Dear friend, the Son of God says to you, "*Remember Lot's wife.*" Think of her relationship with a child of God, of the surroundings in which she lived. How often she must have witnessed the pain of her husband at the filthy conversation of the wicked, and yet she was

unconverted, in her sins, and in heart and affection identified with what was about to be judged.

“Remember Lot’s wife.” “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” “The whole world lieth in wickedness.” “Now is the judgment of this world.” (Luke xvii. 32 ; Matthew vi. 24 ; 1 John ii. 15 ; 1 John v. 19 ; John xii. 31.) “Flee from the wrath to come.” (Matt. iii. 7.)

### **The Remember of Grace.**

In Hebrews x. 17 we have another “remember,” and a very precious one it is. It is the “*remember*” of *God’s grace*, and the precious result of the death of Christ, which assures the believer that his sins are not only forgiven, but everlastingly forgotten by God, who says, “*Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*”

In Hebrews x. we have the will or counsel of God (v. 7), the work of Christ (vv. 10–14), and the witness of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit witnesses of the counsels of divine love, of the glorious work of God the Son, and of the present and everlasting effect of that work for the children of God. They are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once* ; they are by the one offering of Jesus *perfected for ever*, and their sins and iniquities will *God remember no more.*

### **The Remember of Despair.**

Turning back to Luke xvi. 25 we have what



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rightly can be called the "*remember*" of *despair*.

This rich man had lived totally regardless of God ; in fact, he had lived for himself. But such a life does not last for ever. *He "died, AND WAS BURIED ; AND IN HELL HE LIFT UP HIS EYES, BEING IN TORMENTS."*

He who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, now begs a drop of water in hell. He who never had reflected on eternal matters, now reflects with the bitter and awful conviction that he is damned for ever. In the depths of that everlasting woe he is told to *remember* his wasted and selfish life, and that his present condition was but the righteous fruit of a life from which God had been in every way excluded.

It is the "*remember*" of *everlasting despair*. Reader, think of it, either to thank God that you are delivered from it, or to the awakening of your conscience, causing you without delay to hasten to the Saviour who says, "*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.*" (John vi. 37.)

### **The Remember of Affection.**

In Luke xxii. 19 we read, "And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me." Here is the institution of the precious memorial of the

dying love of the Saviour, and a calling to remembrance His sufferings and death upon the cross. *It is the remembrance of affection.* The people of God gather around the Lord at His table, and in remembrance of His death break bread.

The Saviour, though in glory, prizes the remembrance of Himself by His people, and could indeed must be the heart that neglects to meet the Lord at His own table, to remember Him, and to show forth His death till He come.

### **The Remember of Gratitude.**

Lastly, in Deuteronomy viii. 2-4, we read, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee . . . to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no. And He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

This is the "*remember*" of *gratitude*. When in the land they were to go over every step of the way, and remember with thankfulness of heart the ways of God with them in the wilderness.

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It will be when the people of God reach their home in glory. Their minds will turn back to the world—the moral desert—through which they have been brought by the God of all grace. *All* the way which the Lord has led them will be remembered. His proving of their heart, His sustaining word, His grace that met all their need, His chastisement, His patience, and ministry of changeless love—all will be remembered with a heart overflowing with gratitude and praise.

But to one scene above all others will their minds revert—the death of the cross. Gethsemane, where the Saviour poured out His soul in agonising prayer in view of His death; Gabbatha, where the Son of God stood at man's judgment bar and was condemned; Golgotha, where the divine Substitute suffered in our stead, bore our sins, endured our judgment, and died that we might live, will for ever be remembered, and as they behold before them their beloved Saviour, the Lamb of God, who died for them, with one heart and one voice they will raise their eternal hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb. The cross, the death of the Son of God, will be had in everlasting remembrance.

The new and eternal song of the redeemed will be, "Thou art worthy . . . for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and

priests," &c. (Rev. v. 9, 10.) "And they shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xxii. 5.)

Beloved reader, may God's Spirit bless these six 'remembers' to your soul. If saved, may you be led to adore and serve the blessed Lord of all grace who has saved you. And if unconverted, may your whole being be awakened to the necessity of being saved, ere the day of grace closes, and the night of eternal woe settles down upon your soul.

Remember, God beseeches you, the Son of God invites you, and the Holy Spirit says, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb. iii. 7, 8.)

What an eternity yours will be if all this has no effect upon you. E. A.

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## OPENED EYES.

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."—PSALM cxix. 18.

**I**N this verse the Psalmist prays that God would open his eyes, not that he was physically blind, but he desired spiritual eyesight. I propose to look at some of the cases recorded in Scripture of those whose eyes were opened, though they were not physically blind.

We may notice in passing the earnest desire of the apostle for the saints of this dispensation, who, as we know, are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He prays

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that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of His calling, &c., or, in the words of the Psalmist, "behold wondrous things out of Thy law." (See Eph. i. 18, New Trans.)

Turning to Genesis iii. 1-7 we find Adam and Eve getting their eyes opened through eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, in disobedience. Their state of innocence was gone, their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked. But while they learned so much about themselves, they did not learn one single truth about God. On the contrary, Satan lied to Eve about Him (*vv.* 1-5). She believed his lie, and multitudes of her descendants believe to this day that neither God nor His word can be trusted. How solemn this is, and how different all would have been had God Himself given man to eat of the tree of knowledge. How hopeless our case would have been had God left us to ourselves, with the knowledge resulting from disobedience, which left us in ignorance of God, in our sins, and in the power of the enemy.

Blessed be God He has not done so, but, as we read in Acts xxvi. 16-18, His servant Paul was sent with the gospel to open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we might receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those which are sanctified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus the first effect of the gospel is to open

our eyes, or to give us true spiritual intelligence, and that of God Himself, for in the gospel He is revealed as Light and Love, as the One too in whom, and in whose word, we can trust implicitly.

How can we doubt God, who "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? (See John iii. 16.) How blessed when the gospel thus opens our eyes to know the love of God.

But I apprehend our eyes are again opened, as in Luke xxiv. 30-32, to know Him. God not only opens our eyes that we may know the truth about Himself and the way in which the work of the Lord Jesus has cleared our sins away, but He makes the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—the glorified Man at God's right hand—a blessed reality to the spiritual eye.

The opened Scriptures in Luke xxiv. caused the two on their way to Emmaus to have burning hearts, but the opened eyes—opened to the person of their Saviour—sent them back to Jerusalem to the gathered saints (*v.* 33), there they found themselves once more in His company. (*v.* 36.) And let me tell you, when once your eyes have been opened to know Him, when once your heart has tasted His company, you will never be satisfied without it.

Our next Scripture is Genesis xxi. 14-19. Hagar and Ishmael are in the wilderness, and the water is spent in the bottle; that is, her supply

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has run out, and, being in the wilderness, there is no one to turn to but God. Like many another in similar circumstances she gives up in despair and weeps. You often hear it said, "I have no one but God," as if that were a doleful case. Well, let us remember that Hagar got no sympathy in her sorrow, on the contrary, the angel of God says, "What aileth thee, Hagar?" And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. It does not say God miraculously caused the water to spring up, no, it was there all the time, but Hagar, like many another, was blind to the resources she had in God. She wept because her bottle was empty, while all the time there was an inexhaustible supply within reach. How often we too are straitened in ourselves.

Again, what lessons we learn from 2 Kings vi. 15-17. Elisha's servant is at his wit's end when he sees the Syrian army round the city, and he goes to his master saying, "How shall we do?" Elisha is in the secret of the Lord; he has not to pray that the angel of the Lord may camp round about them and deliver them, but he prays to the Lord to open his servant's eyes, and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha. How blessed to be so near the Lord oneself, that when in a time of danger, with no way of escape apparently open to us, in happy intelligent enjoyment of His care we can pray the Lord to open the eyes of the troubled ones.

My last text is Numbers xxii. 31, where the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and unseen, spiritual, and eternal things were made known to him in all their terrible reality.

How awful the after history of the man who knew the certainty of God's judgment, and yet did not turn from his wicked way.

Twice in chapter xxiv. he speaks of himself as "the man whose eyes are open"; and in verse 17 he pronounces his own doom in the solemn words, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh." When we remember it is said in Rev. i. 7 "Every eye shall see Him," we can understand something of the unutterable sadness of Balaam's words. As another has said, "The lost souls in hell will never forget that they saw Jesus; aye, all shall see Him; and oh the wail of the lost, 'I have seen Him; I have seen Jesus; I have looked upon the One who might have been my Saviour. I know what heaven is now since I have seen Him, but I have lost Him for ever!'"

Reader, take care lest your eyes having been opened to the reality of eternal things, you should be found among those spoken of in Acts xiii. 41 as despisers, who wonder and perish. On the other hand, if the gospel has come to you, opening your eyes, may it be your prayer, as it is mine, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." W. M.



“IN MY NAME.”

JOHN xiv. 26.

“They also.”—JOHN xvii. 19, 21, 24.

O LORD of life and glory,  
 Enthroned in heaven above,  
 How endless is the story  
 Of all Thy wondrous love !  
 Once here a man wayfaring,  
 To tell Thy Father's grace ;  
 Delighting now in sharing  
 With us Thy home and place.  
  
 As some beloved one, going,  
 Would say—‘ Take care of mine ’ ;  
 The Comforter is showing  
 Thy care for what is Thine.  
 How little do we treasure  
 This Gift sent from on high ;  
 Whose office is, and pleasure,  
 Thy name to glorify.  
  
 Our things an object making  
 Where Thou *in death* hast been ;  
 Our place so slow in taking  
 With Thee outside this scene.  
 Oh, thrill our hearts, Lord Jesus,  
 That they more loyal be ;  
 Thy name should be most precious,  
 Thy things should speak of *Thee*.  
  
 Throned in the burning glory,  
 Set at the Father's side,  
 Where radiant hosts adore Thee,  
 Where God, our life, doth hide.  
 Love, from which nought can sever,  
 Doth still Thine own enfold ;  
 “ They also,” with Thee ever,  
 Thy glory shall behold.

M. A. W.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

INQUIRER.—1 Timothy v. 23. We have in this passage an indirect testimony to the temperate habits of this man of God. With the evil practices of the heathen before his eyes, who were accustomed to indulge in excesses in honour of their deities, he felt it the more incumbent upon him to shun the use of wine. But Timothy's "often infirmities" led Paul to counsel him to take a little—it would be good for him. Nor are we to think such a thing beneath the thought of the Spirit of God. Nothing is too small for His condescending love.

W. G.—We think it will be found that when the Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity are distinguished, then the work of creation is never attributed to *the Father*, but always to the Son or the Holy Spirit. It is true that in the Revised Version the first "by" in chap. i. 16 is rendered "in," but this does but strengthen what we affirm. If you refer to the New Translation by J. N. D., you will see a footnote on this identical particle. It signifies "in the power of whose person. He was the One whose intrinsic power characterised the creation. It exists as His creature." The term Firstborn means Head, even as it was said of Solomon, in other connections, "I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth." It has reference to place and not to time. Surely anyone can understand that if the Creator takes a place in relation to creation it must necessarily be that of Firstborn or Head. What other place should He take than that? But your letter raises a doubt in our mind as to your holding fast to the Deity of the Lord Jesus. We trust

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our impression is not correct. Should it be, we do most solemnly warn you against the deadly peril in which you stand; for if the Deity of the Son be denied, then the atoning character of His death is gone, and with it all the hopes founded thereon. The deadliest assaults of the devil at the present moment are directed against these cardinal truths, and those who lead in this soul-destroying war, and pose as heroes, are the inflated, pretentious men of the higher-criticism school, who in due time, together with their deluded followers, shall reap the reward of their evil deeds.

JOHN x. 17, 18.—In speaking of life it is extremely important nowadays to clearly see in what sense you or others use the term, as it has many meanings. If you do not attend to this it is very possible that you may speak of life in one sense, and the one who speaks to you may employ it in another. Now when the Lord speaks of laying down his life, He, of course, does not mean His true essential life, for that He never laid down, nor do we as regards our souls. He was always alive, and all live unto God. But what the Lord laid down was life in the conditions in which He lived it here, subject, as we know Him to have been, to hunger, weariness, and thirst. Life in these conditions the Lord never resumed, but He took it up in other conditions altogether. So do we. It was to that life thus laid down by Him, and never to be taken again, that sin was attached—not His own, of course, but ours, for our sins were imputed to Him, and He was made sin for us. In Himself He was ever absolutely holy; but at the cross our sins were made to meet on Him, and in atonement and under the judgment of God the life in which He was made sin was laid down for ever.

Therefore in resurrection the Lord Jesus, though still a man, is a man of a new order, and to whose blessed image in glory we are predestined to be conformed.

ONE YOUNG IN THE FAITH.—Although our first parents were created and placed in the garden of Eden in a state of innocence, it is evident they were not incapable of falling; for Eve, listening to the serpent's insinuations, eventually believed his lie, distrusted God, and ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was simply set as a test of the creature's obedience, and a reminder that he was but a creature whose glory it should have been to be obedient to his Creator. Why God permitted him to be tempted and fall is a question some might not find it easy to answer. It is an idle question and to no profit. This, however, we know, that the fall of man has furnished the occasion for the richer display of God's love, and for the bringing in of that wonderful redemption which places those who share in it in a position far above that which Adam had in innocence in Eden. But we would beseech all who are "young in the faith" not to argue with infidels, nor endeavour to meet their specious questions and objections. These may admit of the most complete answer, but those "young in the faith" had better leave such work to persons of greater experience. We have known some "young in the faith" who have rashly or incautiously entered the lists against the sceptic, and have learned the unwisdom of their act at a very serious and sorrowful cost. The Master has given to every man his work, but the work of answering the difficulties even of honest infidels is only entrusted to a few. Will "one young in the faith" accept these few words of counsel in the spirit in which they are given?

## WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

A CORRESPONDENT living in New York city writes urging us to state in simple terms what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question is not of second rate importance certainly; for it is written in John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And, again, in verse 18, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Those two passages, which might be multiplied twenty times over, suffice to place the matter in the very first rank.

But the answer to the question, What is it to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? must be shaped somewhat by the state of the one who asks it. Suppose it to be the inquiry of a soul in deep distress about his sins. Probably that individual believes the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, and has some knowledge already of the value of the atoning blood. Anxious to afford him spiritual help, some one points him to Paul's answer to

the jailor in Acts xvi. 31, and the man, in his anxiety to get relief, begs to know what is meant by believing. But then the jailor was an awakened, conscience-stricken man, and so is our imaginary friend. Now all men are not that.

Indeed, in speaking to others about this important subject we often have to show them, first of all, their state before God, for too many are in utter ignorance of it. They ought not to be; but, alas! they are. Yet the Holy Spirit in Romans iii. 9-19 speaks very plainly about it, and no one having access to a Bible need remain in the dark as to the actual condition of every man in the sight of God. And even when this is known and acknowledged to be true the utmost indifference is displayed, unless the conscience be divinely aroused.

It is evident that before anyone can believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul he must hear something about Him. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom. x. 14.) Here are three successive steps—*hearing*, *believing*, *calling*, and this results in salvation; "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Hearing comes first. If a man be suffering from some complaint, and there is but one surgeon

in the land able to do him good, how shall he place himself in his hands if he never hears a word about him? He knows of no such person, and therefore cannot call on him for relief. The first step is to tell him of the one who can cure, where he lives, and as much more about him as you possibly can. In doing this you carry to that man good news. Most likely he will believe you, and if it be in his power he will avail himself at once of the surgeon's aid.

In like manner God speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures, and sends us good tidings of great joy. We learn that unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke ii. 10, 11.) "Thou shalt call His name JESUS," said the angel to Joseph: "for He shall save His people from their sins." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. i. 15.) But this saving of sinners involved the laying down of His life under the solemn judgment of God. Therefore we read that "Christ also hath once *suffered* for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18.) "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief." (Isaiah liii. 10.) "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd." (Zech. xiii. 7.) "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah liii. 5, 6.) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." (Rom. v. 6.) "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim. ii. 6.) "He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Heb. ii. 9.) "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.)

Moreover, in all this "the kindness and *love* of God our Saviour toward man appeared." (Titus iii. 4.) "For God so *loved* the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) "God commendeth His *love* toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. v. 8.) "In this was manifested the *love* of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is *love*, not that we loved God, but that He *loved* us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 9, 10.) Many other passages might be added, but these show that the "good tidings of great joy" not only reveal a Saviour who has died for sinners,



but declare *the love* of God in giving Him to die that perishing men might be saved.

This then is the report that reaches us, glad tidings concerning God's beloved Son, who died for us and rose again; glad tidings in which God Himself is made known in all His righteousness and love. This, I say, is the report. How it reaches us is a matter of no moment. It may come to our ears by our own reading of the Scriptures, or in personal conversation with a friend, or through a tract either given to us in the street or enclosed in a letter from someone interested in our spiritual welfare, or it may reach us through the public preaching of the gospel. The great point is that this blessed report has come to our knowledge. Is there anything in it for you? Is it suitable to your case? Is the Saviour it proclaims the very One you need? Can you trust Him? Can you commit yourself to Him? If you say, "Yes; He is the Saviour I need, and I can trust Him," then, dear soul, you do believe in Him. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is just that. How beautifully simple is this gospel of God!

The second step having been thus reached we pass to the third. Hearing first, then believing on the One of whom you have heard, then *calling*, for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The calling shews the believing to be real. These three steps are strikingly seen in the healing of the woman

with the issue of blood, as narrated in Mark v. 25-34. For twelve weary years she had been a sufferer. The help of many physicians had been sought, and all her living had been spent in a vain search after the health she had lost. When all was gone and she was left hopeless, penniless, the victim of a cruel disease whose ravages no human power could stay, it was then that *she heard of Jesus*. Blessed news for her that there was One able to heal, to whom the poor were as welcome as the wealthy, who accepted no fees even if those who sought His aid were rich beyond all telling, and to whom the beggar in his rags, and he that had not one penny wherewith to bless himself, might come. Hearing thus of Jesus hope and confidence sprang up and found expression in those brave, joyous words, "If I may touch but His clothes, I shall be whole." *Having heard of Him she believed*. So she came and touched. Nor was her confidence misplaced. Many a time had she been disappointed in having recourse to earthly physicians, but in this instance her hopes were to be fully realized, for in touching she was healed immediately. There are the three steps—hearing, believing, calling; and as it was then so is it now.

Perhaps you are disposed to think it cannot be quite so simple as we have described, and that you cannot be saved so very easily. Be assured it is so. You may ask, "But ought I not to feel my

sins more? Have I repented enough? and should I not shew that my repentance is sincere by leading a changed life?" See how you are turning in upon yourself. *My feelings, my repentance, my altered life!* These are the things on which your thoughts are fixed, instead of the "good tidings of great joy" which the Scriptures announce.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is God's message to-day to every anxious soul. There stand the words in all their sublime simplicity. Nothing more is needed, and nothing less will do.

Freely, without money or price, is this salvation offered. *To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is but stretching forth the hand to receive the proffered gift.*

"Let me tell you how a dying lady in the city of Edinburgh found peace," said a preacher of the gospel as he addressed a number of the poor in the city of London, who had remained to an enquiry meeting. "I talked with her for nearly an hour without any apparent good. She wished to be saved, and yet she wasn't saved, that she knew and was sure of, for had she been would she not have felt differently? So she was waiting for a change of feeling before she received Christ as her Saviour. At length it occurred to me to say, 'Suppose I sent you a basket of grapes to-morrow, what would be the first thing you would do?' 'Why,

I should thank you for them,' said she. 'Now, if you were to send me a basket, what do you think would be the *first* thing I should do?' I rejoined. 'Why, thank me, wouldn't you?' 'No,' I replied. At this the lady expressed surprise. 'The *first* thing I should do,' I added, 'would be to take them, and then I should send you my hearty thanks.'" It was only a homely illustration, but it set the dying lady free. She saw that the first thing for her to do was to receive the Saviour, and then she could thank God for such a gift. And this she did.

The Word of God leaves no room for doubts and fears. It gives absolute certainty to those who receive its plain and simple teaching. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." (John vi. 47.) "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John v. 24.) Let us remember that it is God who thus speaks, so that our poor hearts may have perfect rest in relying on His unchanging word. God will never deny Himself; and though heaven and earth may pass away, His word shall stand to everlasting days. Is not that word enough for us?

## THE CONVERSION OF THREE CLERGYMEN.

THERE are perhaps few greater hindrances to a work of grace in the soul than for a person in whom that work has not really begun to be officially appointed as a teacher of others. I read with much interest, many years ago, in a German work entitled "*Elijah the Tishbite*," an illustration of this. The incident is as follows: A clergyman with whom the author was acquainted had been preaching in a very earnest and impressive manner from the third chapter of the Gospel of John, and insisting on the necessity of being born again before any could enter into the kingdom of God. A young man, who had been listening to him, was much affected by his discourse, and at the conclusion of the service sought the clergyman, and asked him if he really believed what he had been preaching, and was as fully assured of its importance as he had appeared to be when addressing his congregation? Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the questioner then rejoined, "If this be so, what shall *we* do?" laying a strong emphasis on the *we*. This question he repeated several times in a very earnest manner. The preacher was deeply affected by the words, and by

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the emphatic way in which they were repeated. He had nothing to say in reply, being struck dumb by the vehemency with which the question was urged, and apparently applied to himself. But this was not all. The effect was permanent. The Spirit of God brought the third verse of the third chapter of John home to his own conscience, and the work of repentance and faith at once began in his soul. He went home and did not appear before his congregation for the space of six weeks. When he again stood in the pulpit he told his hearers that he had never been converted till his own words were pressed upon him by one of his listeners, and they had for the first time become the power of God to the salvation of his soul.

A similar case has been published by the subject of it during the last few years, and with which many of the readers of *Simple Testimony* are probably more or less acquainted, but which I again bring before them as confirming the solemn remark with which this paper commences. The writer is a clergyman of the Church of England, who for years previous to his conversion confesses himself to have been a zealous ritualist. The circumstances which led to his conversion, as detailed by himself, are as follows. He had been seriously offended by his gardener, who, when considered to be dangerously ill, had sent for a Christian layman to visit him,

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and he went at once to complain of what he considered such strange and unaccountable conduct to a neighbouring evangelical clergyman with whom he was intimate. He, however, got no sympathy, indeed his friend went so far as to tell him that *he* would not have sent for him if he had been dying. On being asked his reason for saying this he was told, "Because I don't think that you are converted." This friend also recommended his visitor to give up preaching for a while. All this of course only made matters worse, and he returned home in a state of great excitement and indignation. On reflection, however, he determined to act on his friend's advice. But when Sunday morning came he had so far modified his intention as to go to church and read the prayers and make a few remarks, but made up his mind not to preach a sermon. In speaking from the words, however, "What think ye of Christ?" his conscience told him that his own thoughts of Christ were little better than those of the unbelieving Jews, and this led him to say much more than he had intended, and at last one of the congregation stood up and cried out several times, "The parson's converted!" These circumstances were used by the Spirit of God to lead to a revival in the congregation, and the conversion of many of the people followed that of the minister, who has ever since declared, much to the annoyance of his high church friends, that if

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he had died previous to that eventful Lord's-day morning he should certainly have gone to hell.

The circumstances attending the remarkable conversion of another clergyman, very similar in substance, though diverse in manner, are as follows. This gentleman was an excellent swimmer, and when at a watering place had gone out early one morning to bathe. After having swum out to sea a considerable distance, he felt that it was high time to return to the shore, but found on making the attempt that the tide was too strong for him. After much ineffectual effort, he became exhausted and gave himself up for lost. Suddenly he was overwhelmed by the conviction that if he were drowned, his soul would be lost for ever. Immediately following the sense of his entire ruin and helplessness, there came over him the blessed assurance of the all-sufficient grace of the Lord Jesus, and he at once yielded himself, body, soul, and spirit, into His almighty hands, and thereupon became unconscious. He was whilst in this state, observed and rescued by the master and crew of a fishing smack returning to the harbour after their night's work, whose efforts for his resuscitation were speedily crowned with success. On the following day this newly-converted clergyman met the master and crew who had saved his life, and preached the gospel to them, illustrating it by his own case, as unable to do anything for his own deliverance, but



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having been rescued from a watery grave by the kindly efforts of those whom he was then addressing.

If this little paper should fall into the hands of anyone who, though preaching to others, is uncertain as to his own soul's spiritual condition before God, I would earnestly entreat him to get this momentous question settled at once, and in the meantime to abstain entirely from preaching to others, as this may be the very snare of Satan by which he is blinding him to his own spiritual state. There was no question of the earnestness and sincerity of either of these three preachers, but the devil doubtless used these very things to becloud their minds as to their true condition before God, and to lead them to continue so long substituting their own righteousness for the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“The best obedience of my hands  
Dares not appear before Thy throne,  
But faith can answer Thy demands,  
By pleading what my Lord has done.” J. H. S.

“Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (John iii. 7.)

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God.” (2 Cor. v. 17.)

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” (Gal. vi. 15.)

“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.” (Jer. xviii. 4.)

## SAMSON'S PRAYER.

(A CONTRAST.)

THERE are two death scenes to which I desire to call the reader's attention for a few moments. First, that of Samson, the unfaithful Nazarite, who died in the house of the Philistines as a consequence of his own sin. And, secondly, that of the Lord Jesus, "the faithful and true Witness," in whom no fault was found, and who died for the sins of others. One scene is presented in the book of Judges (chap. xvi.); the other in the gospel of Luke (chap. xxiii.)

Samson was a Nazarite from his birth, and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ until he fell into sin and was shorn of his strength, and thus became a contrast to Christ for the rest of his days.

A Nazarite is one that is consecrated to God and separated from evil, and thus enjoys His special favour, and gains the victory over his enemies.

We see in Samson's case a man with unlimited strength reduced to a state of extreme weakness through waywardness of heart and trifling with sin. Such a sight may well constrain us to say—

"Arm me with jealous care,  
As in Thy sight to live."

A very little thing will grieve the Spirit of God, depriving us both of comfort in communion with Him and of strength for conflict with Satan.

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In Eph. vi. the Christian is exhorted to "put on the whole armour of God," that he may be able "to stand against the wiles of the devil"; and along with this, to be "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." (10, 11, and 18.) Prayer is the expression of dependence, and is a means, not only of holding the warrior up, but of bringing God in to drive the enemy out. (See Isa. xxxvii.)

We can only be kept on our feet in the battle-field by keeping on our knees like Daniel, who poured out his prayer to God continually.

It is surprising to see at what an awful rate Samson went from strength to extreme weakness, when once he confided in a woman, whose heart was as deceitful as his own. His strength appears to have left him in as little time as it took to remove the locks of his hair, and when this was done he sustained a loss which was irrecoverable, and which serves as a warning to the children of God against unwatchfulness and waywardness of heart.

Satan duped Samson, the woman in whom he confided deceived him, the Lord departed from him, and, to complete his misery, the Philistines degraded him, and having put out his eyes they cast him into prison, and left him there to deplore his loss and spend his remaining strength in their service until God appeared in his behalf.

Samson in all his weakness and degradation

was capable of doing a little work for the enemy, and of making sport for them that hated him.

It is in this way that Satan succeeds with the children of God who are in a backsliding state of soul. While doing Satan's work the finger of scorn is pointed at them by those who make sport of them, saying, "That's your Christianity." But God will not forsake His people, as was seen in the case of Samson.

"And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars." It is of importance to notice that the hair of his head had already begun to grow again (verse 22), which was a sign of revival of strength. "And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them. Now the house was full of men and women; and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport. And Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes. And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his

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left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

It was in his dying hour, and in answer to prayer, that the mighty Samson regained possession of the power he had lost. As soon as it was granted, he used it both right and left for the destruction of them that had afflicted him.

In striking contrast to Samson is the example of the blessed Lord, to whose innocence the dying thief could testify, saying, "This Man hath done nothing amiss." Jesus, the true Nazarite, never forfeited the favour of God for one single moment, nor suffered Himself to be turned aside from the path of obedience to His Father's will. He had only to ask for twelve legions of angels, and instantly they would be sent, and He it was who could say, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." In the garden of Gethsemane He had only to say "I am He," and they that came to take Him "went backward and fell to the ground." He submitted truly to the insults of men, but not for want of power to free Himself from suffering and shame, had it pleased Him so to do. Suffering and submission formed part of His perfection as man, and the path of obedience which He trod "led only to the cross." The Philistines degraded Samson, and if we think of his

unfaithfulness we might say that he well deserved it. The soldiers degraded with mock majesty "the King of kings," and He despised "the shame." While they degraded Him we adore Him and sing—

"King of glory, set on high,  
Girt with strength and majesty,  
We Thy holy name confess,  
Thee with adoration bless."

"And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ." (Luke xxii. 33–35.) Let us mark the contrast then between Samson's and the Saviour's prayer. The former sought the destruction of his enemies, and secured it in answer to prayer. The latter secured salvation for the chief of sinners, through His blood-shedding and intercession on the cross. Samson slew his enemies and died *with* them. The Lord Jesus saved sinners by dying *for* them.

"Who is He in Calvary's throes  
Asking pardon for His foes?  
'Tis the Lord, the King of glory,  
'Tis the Lord, oh! wondrous story,  
At His feet we humbly fall,  
Crown Him, crown Him, Lord of all."

H. H.

## I, THE OLD MAN, THE FLESH, AND SIN.

THERE is a lack of clearness in many minds in relation to these terms. They are often used more or less interchangeably, as though they meant the same thing. This is necessarily a loss both to speaker and hearer. The Holy Ghost uses distinct terms to convey His thoughts, and we should seek, of course, to apprehend them. Now these terms, though *closely allied*, are never confounded in Scripture.

1. "I" denotes the individual person. Everyone has an individuality. In the natural state I live as a responsible man, and I am a lost and guilty sinner; but Christ having died for me, my sins are forgiven through faith in His name, and I am also *viewed of God* as having died with Christ. But not only so, for I reckon myself alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans vi. 8-11.) I am indeed the same person, only in an entirely new position and condition *before God*, although sin is still in me. With this precious truth before his soul Paul said, "I am [have been] crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith

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of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

In Romans vii. we get the miserable experience of a man under law vainly striving to free himself from bondage by his own efforts. At last he learns that God has set "*I*" aside in the cross of His Son. Coming to this point he exclaims, "O wretched man that *I* am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer to this cry of despair is found in the following words, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

2. "*The old man*" is an expression which is evidently very closely allied to the "*I*," yet if one examines the Scripture attentively, where both terms occur, it is clear they cannot be used interchangeably. *The old man* in Scripture is contrasted with *the new man*, and carries my thoughts back to Adam fallen. As descended from him, the old man characterises me. But Romans vi. 6 teaches us that the believer should know that "*our old man* is [has been] crucified with Him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed [annulled,] that henceforth we should not serve sin." *This is how God sees it.* But to show how intimately it is connected with (though distinguished from) the old *I*, immediately after, the Scripture adds, "For *he* that is dead [has died] is freed from sin." (v. 7.)

In Col. iii. 9 we get, "Lie not one to another,



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seeing *ye* have put off *the old man* with his deeds, and have put on *the new man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." "The old man" is here looked at as that which *I* as an individual have put off, and "the new man" as that which *I* as an individual have put on. God has done with the former, and the Christian should have God's thoughts about it, and have done with it too. God views us as having put on the new man; and hence the new man alone should now characterise us here, as we know most assuredly that nothing but what is of the new man will abide when we leave this scene for the glory of God. (See also Eph. iv. 22-24, New Translation.)

3. "*The flesh*" is another oft-recurring expression in Scripture, and must be distinguished from flesh and blood. Adam was flesh and blood before the fall, but having disobeyed God, he fell, and the whole human race descending from him has been away from God ever since. When we come to the pages of the New Testament, where we get the fully-developed doctrine of man's state before God, the term "*the flesh*" occurs as expressing that state. It is found, for instance, in Rom. vii., viii. (*not in* chap. vi.), and is contrasted with "the Spirit." It is our characteristic condition as unconverted men, and is utterly irremediable. (Rom. vii. 24, 25; viii. 1.) Though most intimately connected with the old man, one

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cannot use it as an interchangeable term. When speaking of the old man the Scripture says, Having "*put off* the old man"; but in speaking of the flesh, "Ye are *not in* the flesh."

Now, when we are "in Christ" the flesh is viewed as a past state—"when we *were* in the flesh." (Chap. vii. 5.) And "*ye are not* in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." (Chap. viii. 9.) The believer, being in Christ, and having the Spirit of God, is henceforth to walk, not after the flesh (which still remains in him, and not a whit better, though he is not in it), but after the Spirit, and the righteousness (or righteous requirement) of the law is then fulfilled in him, though he be not under it. (Chap. viii. 4.) "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are *in the flesh* cannot please God." (Rom. viii. 5-8.)

In Gal. v. 16-23 we learn what the works of the flesh are, and we are exhorted to walk in the Spirit, that we should in no way fulfil the lust of the flesh. "They that are Christ's have crucified *the flesh* with the affections and lusts." (v. 24.)

"*The old nature.*" This is an expression which

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one often hears, though the actual term is not found in Scripture. The Holy Ghost clothes His thoughts as it pleases Him, and though one well understands what is meant by the old and new natures, it is very easy to employ these terms in a way which is apt to confuse rather than to clear souls. For instance, one has often heard Christians say, "The old nature is dead." Scripture says, "*He* that is dead (or has died) is freed from sin. Now if *we* be dead (or have died) with Christ," &c. (Rom. vi. 7, 8.) And, "*Ye* are dead (or have died)." (Col. iii. 3.)

The Word, as we have seen, contrasts *flesh* and *Spirit*. And this is what is mostly referred to when Christians speak of the two natures. Conceived in sin, and shapened in iniquity, we are born into the world in a fallen condition, characterized by what Scripture calls "*the flesh*," and we need to be born again. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John iii. 6.)

In 2 Peter i. 4, where the apostle speaks of exceeding great and precious promises given unto us, "that by these ye might be partakers of *the divine nature*," &c., he is not referring to the new birth, but to what should follow upon that first work of the Spirit of God. Divine power *works* in us, fixing the soul on what is divinely revealed, and we are thus made *morally* partakers of the divine nature.

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4. "*Sin.*" This is the evil principle which reigns in the unconverted man. The flesh in him, which he inherits through the fall, is characterized by it, and hence we read of "*sinful* flesh," and "sin in the flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.) Sin has the mastery over him, so that it is far easier to do what is evil than to do what is good. "Sin" is the evil root principle in him, that produces the evil fruit "*sins*," of which the world is full. It is impossible either to root it out, and get rid of it, or to change it. Sin is sin, and remains sin. But Christ, sinless, having borne its judgment on our behalf, died to it, and is risen and glorified. The believer, too, is not only forgiven his sins, but is dead with Christ to sin, before God, and is exhorted to ever hold himself dead to it, and alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rom. vi. 11.) So doing it has no longer dominion over him, and in the power of the Spirit, who dwells in him, he can walk so as to please God.

We feel it is no easy matter to define these differences in Scripture. It is important; however, not to mix things which have *a distinct signification, however intimately connected*. But if our readers are led to look more closely into the teaching of the Word on these points we are assured they will thereby reap a blessing, and our few feeble remarks will not have been in vain. E. H. C.

## RELIGION OR CHRIST—WHICH ?

I WAS asked to visit a poor woman dying of consumption. As I entered the room I saw, by the hectic flush upon the cheek, that her days here were numbered. She was young and of a beautiful countenance, and yet so soon to pass into that other world from which none ever return to tell the tale of woe tasted by those who know not Jesus.

Entering into conversation with her, I found she was a stranger to Christ, although professing to know Him. Like so many others, she thought herself quite prepared to meet God, seeing she had no fear. Everything too that I told her she had known from her childhood, and could repeat the very texts I was urging upon her for her acceptance. How diverse the effects of human religion and of the Spirit's work in the heart. The latter only humbles us while the other puffs up. Asking the Lord for a scripture which would meet this case of urgent need, I could think of nothing but the story of the love of God in Luke xv. I quietly went over the verses which describe the prodigal son's condition, and pressed her need upon her, but left with a downcast spirit, looking to God to open her dark heart to Christ. I called again and again, and was led to turn to the same passage, in which the sweet story of old shines so brightly in every line. One day when

I called she was apparently very low. The cough was worse, and her end seemed much nearer. After speaking for a few moments together I asked, "What shall I read you?" "Oh, sir," said she, "read the prodigal son! God has taught me that I have been the wanderer, and the Father has received me back into His arms." How rich is the love that welcomes and forgives! Oh, what a ray of sunshine was this to my heart! We prayed together, thanking Him, in whose presence we soon shall meet, for such mercy. A few days more passed, and she was called away to see the face of Him whom she loved and longed to see. The Father had *waited* for her, and now gently released her from suffering, and took her to His blissful home.

Dear reader, have *you* Christ waiting for you? Have you a place in that home on high? What are you building on? Is it Christ? or only a cold and lifeless profession, which may bolster you up with false hope until you find yourself in hell? Come then to Him who seeks you. "Come," surrender, and "rest." "Come now," saith the prophet (Isaiah i. 18): and "your sins . . . shall be as white as snow."

"Come unto Me," saith the Saviour, "and I will give you rest." Some can say—

"I came to Jesus *as I was*,  
Weary, and worn, and sad;  
I found in Him a resting place,  
And He has made me glad."

God grant you may too, my reader, for His name's sake.

A. E. W.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. M. C. Philippians i. 6 ; 2 Thessalonians ii. 2.—Do you chance to have at hand the Revised Version of the New Testament, or the New Translation of J. N. Darby? If so, kindly turn to 2 Thess. ii. 2, and you will see that it should read "*the day of the Lord*," not "the day of Christ," as in our Authorised Version. Now this fact alone should greatly assist in delivering you from your perplexity. The day of the Lord is mentioned both in the Old and New Testaments, and is associated with gloom, darkness, and judgments on the earth. (See Joel ii. 1, 2.) But the day of Jesus Christ is allied with quite another line of thought—all that is bright and lovely, all that is the fruit of God's grace and Spirit is connected with that blessed day.

The last trump, in 1 Corinthians xv. 52, is an allusion to the practice of the Roman army. When the camp was to move three trumps were sounded—the first bade the men prepare, the second signified that all was ready, and when the last sounded the march began. It has no reference to the seventh trumpet in the book of the Revelation. Be on your guard against that system of prophetic interpretation which forbids its followers to look for the immediate return of the Lord for His saints, and in place of it sets them a-watching for the manifestation of the man of sin. If you get caught in its meshes you will lose much.

A. E. S. Revelation ii. 17.—The white stone has been regarded by some as referring to the pebble of

acquittal used in Greek courts. Others have seen in it a reference to the tickets presented to victors at the public games, securing them maintenance at the public expense. Be that as it may, it is evidently a token of Christ's approbation; and the new name written thereon is some blessed secret known only to Him and to the one to whom the white stone is given. May it be yours to receive it!

The millennial kingdom can hardly be said to begin with the catching away of the saints, alluded to in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. Certain events will have necessarily to transpire after the Church has been taken to heaven before that blissful reign begins. We are not aware of any scripture that indicates precisely how long an interval there will be, but we may justly infer that it will be but short.

R. B. N. 1 Cor. xi. 1-16; 1 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.—The first of these passages in no way collides with the remaining two, as you seem disposed to think. It does not treat of the place of women *in the assembly*, whereas that is particularly the point in chapter xiv. In the epistle to Timothy the apostle refers to women as a class—theirs is the quiet, subject place, for so hath the Lord ordained. The lead is to be taken by man. But if women are not to speak in the assembly, yet in the suited sphere they may surely exercise whatever gift they have received, having due regard, always and everywhere, to the ways of God. Philip, the evangelist, we are told, had daughters who prophesied, and though in the assembly their gift would not be called into play, yet certainly it was not to be hidden in the earth. As to the public preaching of women being blessed in conversion, we do not doubt it; but that does not make their position right. Many things God may use for the furtherance of His purposes that are not in themselves in accordance with His mind.



## VICTORY OVER SIN ;

OR,

### THE SECRET OF A HOLY LIFE.

IT is a remarkable fact, which no one can deny, that when a person is converted to God, no matter what his previous life has been, he straight-way longs to be holy. Why is this ?

The only just answer to such a question is that the individual has been born again—born of God. In this Divine operation a new life is communicated, the nature of which is holy, and as a sure consequence holy desires spring up in the soul that were never known before.

There are many things relating to natural life that baffle the investigation of the wisest, so we need not marvel if in the sphere of spiritual life we find that which refuses to be defined. But nothing is more certain than this—that in the moral being of a converted person there has been implanted a life altogether new and distinct from the life and nature of one who is only a child of Adam—not converted, not born again. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Each life partakes of the nature of its source. (John iii. 6.)

The communication of this new life in no way improves the old, much less does it do away with

it. That remains as it ever was, having the same desires and propensities as it had before the individual was born again. So that in one and the same person there are two natures—the one evil, the other good. These may be likened to two streams running side by side, never mingling, ever remaining separate, the one black and polluted, the other pure and undefiled. Now the former ends with the ending of our earthly days, while the latter flows into the vast ocean of Eternity.

It by no means follows that because a person has been born again, therefore his mind will be at rest about his sins. The new birth does not clear sin from the conscience. Indeed, it is no uncommon thing for the new-born soul to be more unhappy than before. The very fact of his having a new and holy nature makes him increasingly sensible of his sins and the hatefulness of them. He groans under their burden, and being ignorant of grace and of his own helplessness, thinks to rid himself of it by trying to live without sinning more.

But it is impossible that any should reach the goal of rest by that road. In what way, let me ask, could our living without sin, even were such a state to be attained, meet God's righteous requirements in respect of the sins with which we are justly chargeable? Suppose some one owed you a sum of money, and was extremely sorry to have incurred the debt, and promised never to

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add to it to the extent of a single shilling. The promise might be faithfully kept, but you could not be expected to regard that as a settlement of the debt already owing to you.

If you say, "But ought I not to be holy?" I answer, "Yes, of course you ought." Still, the putting away of our sins from God's sight is not effected thus. It is true the number of them might not be added to, but the solemn fact remains that we have already sinned enough to merit everlasting punishment, and no effort of ours can deliver us from this state of guilt.

Nothing brings lasting relief to the conscience thus burdened and troubled, but the certain knowledge that in respect of these sins God Himself is already satisfied. Oh, what joy to know that He is! All that our wretched sins deserved has been shown at the cross, in that He forsook His own Son, whom He there made sin for us. There too we see displayed the tender, pitying, compassionate love of God to sinful men—love so true, so measureless, but which, alas! we are so slow to believe. And He has raised up that Saviour from the dead and given Him glory, that our faith and hope might find a sure resting-place in God Himself. Do I believe in Jesus? Do I trust Him? If so, though sins beyond number be mine, yet God freely justifies me from them all, *and is just in doing so*, because of the value of the blood shed at Calvary. If I believe this sure

testimony of God, borne to me in a thousand passages of Scripture, then is my conscience purged, for who can condemn, or lay aught to the charge of those whom God justifies? (Rom. viii. 33, 34.)

And if my conscience is thus purged by the blood of Christ no holiness on my part can purge it more. How can you purge that which is already purged, or extinguish a light that is already extinguished, or cast into the sea that which has been cast there already? The work is done. Moreover, were all the holiness of the redeemed mine, and I threw it into the scale with the blood of Jesus, I should only dishonour the blood by so doing, and cast a slight upon my Saviour. It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul, nothing else.

But if we are as clear as a sunbeam about all that, if not a cloud as large as a man's hand is to be seen in the broad expanse, still the question of holiness forces itself to the front, and clamours to be set at rest. At first the forgiven one is so absorbed with forgiveness that for a few days or weeks all goes smoothly—sunshine and song everywhere. But after a while the exuberance of joy subsides, and he becomes alarmed at his coldness and at the presence of indwelling sin, together with the awakening of old desires, which he thought had been silenced for ever. This is a grievous disappointment, and his heart is greatly

troubled. Fain would he lay his head, like favoured John, upon the Saviour's bosom, and sit at His feet and hear His word as Mary did. To live to God is his one desire; but he finds himself confronted at every turn by an opposing power called "*sin in the flesh*," which he is unable to overcome, and which holds him in hard bondage. "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do," is now his mournful confession. (Romans vii. 19.) Intense distress results from this, with bitterness and anguish of spirit. He groans and sighs, and longs for freedom from this hateful yoke, and, like a captured bird, beats himself against the bars of his cage in his attempts to gain it. But the prison is too strong for him.

Often, if I may be allowed to speak of myself for a moment, in the earlier stages of my spiritual career, have I been brought to that point. Desiring to do good, I did it not, and yielded to the evil which I hated after the inward man. Then would I ask myself whether there was no deliverance from such a state as that? I felt there surely was, for I could not bring myself to believe that the soldiers of Christ were always to be vanquished, always to be driven ignominiously from the field. Victory there must be, victory over sin and self, of that I was assured, but how to achieve it I could not tell.

And when the soul is in that state it utters

bitter things against itself. It bemoans its want of love to the Saviour, and the absence of a heart entirely consecrated to Him. Its deadness causes great trouble, and many a time it is ready to believe that it has been playing a hypocrite's part. Once in a way a gleam of light breaks through the oppressive gloom—the soul gets a fresh glimpse of the love of God, and is preserved from sheer despair. Alas! driven by some unpropitious wind, the parted clouds soon blend again, and the comfortable vision of God's love is once more shut out. Oh, the agony of such hours—agony all the more intense as the soul is sincere and earnest!

Conscience is keenly alive, urging to greater effort so that lost ground might be regained. The spur, and the whip with ten thongs, are freely used. Then the voice of the ancient lawgiver is heard saying, "You ought to love God with all the strength of heart and mind, but you do not. You ought to turn away from all evil and from the vanities of earth, but you too often follow them. How can you expect God to bless you?" Then in the distorted vision of the soul Christ too becomes a law. "The Son of God has loved you and given Himself for you, why do you not give yourself to Him? You must try harder." These or similar words ring in the ear, and the soul thinks, "Ah! if I could only do this, God would love me more. He would view me with greater

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favour, and my acceptance with Him would be more assured." Again it tries, and again it fails, and becomes cowed, disheartened, and despairing.

Satan's opportunity has now come, and he is not slow to seize it. Says he, "Ah! you will never be able to live a Christian life. You ought to have thought of all this long ago, and never to have made any confession of Christ at all. Better give the whole thing up. You have miserably broken down again and again, and what hope is there of your doing better in the future? The battle is too strong for you. Don't wear a mask, and act the hypocrite. Cease your endeavours, and enjoy the pleasures of the world while you may. If you are to be saved you will be, and there you had better leave it." And most assuredly you would believe his words and follow his counsel did not an unseen power hold you back.

Naturally you now suppose that your repeated breakdowns have produced some change in God's feelings toward you. You are conscious that He ought to regard you with less favour; it is only what you deserve. But all such thoughts are mistaken. His heart is not changed. He loves you as much as ever. These humbling discoveries of what you are in relation to sin and weakness are no surprises to Him. He knew it all perfectly well before He called you out of the unbelieving crowd. You find it hard to realize that He

loves you just the same, and views you with the tenderest compassion. But He does. You are learning lessons of life-long value. The schooling process may not be pleasant, but you will find it to have been profitable before long.

For there are certain truths to which we are ready enough to subscribe in the first blush of our conversion, which have to be made good in us afterwards in an experimental way. This is what has been happening with you. Every converted person, for example, is ready enough to acknowledge his own inherent badness, but it is only after long and fruitless struggles to be better that he is forced to the conviction that in him good does not dwell. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." (Romans vii. 18.) When this is learnt the soul ceases to look for good where not a shred of it exists. Then it learns not only to hate its sins, but to abhor itself. It is not merely that I have sinned, but that I am in myself nothing but sin; in me good is not. Along with this goes the kindred truth that we are "*without strength*," and this perhaps is harder still to learn. No strength for salvation we freely confess to have, but we think at first that we have, or ought to have, strength to perform that which is good, and to overcome the sin that dwells in us and is constantly rising up. To have the growing consciousness of our utter badness is bad enough,



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but to find out that every successive effort to overcome it only makes it more evident that we have no strength, is painful in the extreme. Under such circumstances we should soon yield to despair were it not for the grace of God.

Have you ever noticed how the man in Romans vii. 20 distinguishes between himself and sin that dwells in him—the evil principle within which everybody has, whether converted or not? Its movements had caused him untold anguish, for he could not control it, much less place the heel of victory upon its neck. But he hated it with all its deeds, and would fain have flung it from him, exclaiming, "*It is no more I.*" He owns it no longer as himself, and cries for someone to deliver him from its hateful bondage. There is a new I, for the man has been born again, and he identifies himself instinctively with the new nature which he had as being thus new-born. *Have you learned to distinguish between yourself, as born of God, and sin that dwells within you?* And are you looking for deliverance from your present state through the grace and power of Another, even Jesus Christ our Lord, and not by your own effort? It is most important that you should. Stop, and think of that.

Let me ask another question. Has there been any action on God's part in relation to this evil principle, called in Romans viii. 3, "Sin in the flesh"? There has. The same verse tells us that

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God has condemned it, and this He did in the cross of His own Son, when that blessed One not only bore our sins, but was made sin for us. (2 Cor. v. 21.) There is a depth of meaning in those words, "made sin," which I cannot explain. But I see at least that this hateful thing, which is "no more I," God has condemned once for all. This being so, it is evident that if fruit to God is brought forth in our life, it must be in connection with the new nature and with the Spirit of God now given unto us.

Follow me closely while we briefly consider the new position into which the Christian is brought, and may God give you eyes to see that this position is yours. It is defined by the terms "*in Christ*" and "*in the Spirit*." To many minds these terms are very vague, but they lie at the centre of our subject, so we must try to understand them. Now it is not difficult to see that in our unconverted days all our connections were with Adam fallen—our moral links were with him. We inherited his nature, and being head of the race he involved by his disobedience all his posterity in one universal ruin and condemnation. Every child of Adam is born into the world in that sinful, ruined state. This is the argument of Romans v. 12-21, which you may read with profit. But the Lord Jesus Christ is not only Saviour, but Head of a new race altogether. Therefore is He called "*The Last Adam*" and "*The*

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*Second Man*," whose obedience even unto death extends in untold blessing to that race of which He is the Head. There is, there can be, no condemnation to those who are *in Him*. (Romans viii. 1.)

It is a remarkable title that of "*The Second Man*." In the course of nature Cain was the second man, but the Holy Ghost passes over all the generations from Adam downwards, and reserves this striking name for the Lord Jesus Christ. *He* is the Second Man. But though in His own person He was this from the moment of incarnation, yet He only took this place actually and definitely when He was raised from the dead. How should He stand forth as the Second Man until the history of "the first man" had terminated in death for all who believe. For we have died with Christ. (Romans vi. 6, 8.) Our old man has been crucified with Him. But stay! Perhaps I am going faster than you can follow. Let us pause for a moment and take breath.

I was saying that we have died with Christ—or rather Scripture says so. Now we must be simple and childlike as to this, believing it because God says it. God views us as having died with Christ, and faith on our part will ever lead us to speak as God speaks. If I then as a child of Adam have died with Christ, death has ended my history as of "the first man," and the story of my life as one of Adam's race has been told both

for God and for me even to the last syllable of it. If your neighbour died yesterday there is nothing more to be written down in his diary, he is gone, and the place that knew him once knows him no more for ever. So with us. We have died with Christ, and in His grave we have been buried.

Oh, the blessedness of knowing that we are thus clean out of our old associations, and out of the ruin and condemnation under which we lay! They are all behind, and the cross, death, and grave of Christ stand between me and them. Every moral link with "the first man Adam" has been dissolved by death, never to be formed again, and now I am alive, for a new life is mine, in Jesus Christ our Lord. I belong to the new race of which He is the risen, living, victorious Head!

I can easily imagine your saying, "Would that I realized all this; but, alas! I do not." Stop! Before we discuss how much or how little you realize, let me inquire whether you believe it. You will find there is power in your taking, in faith, this glorious position, which belongs in truth to every saint on earth. Let a man who toils from morning till night for the barest necessities of life be told on indisputable authority that he is born of noble blood, and that estate and fortune wait to be claimed and taken possession of by him. Will such a piece of news, if believed, have no power over the individual concerned?

And that all these things might not lie as mere

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doctrines on the leaves of our Bible, the Holy Spirit is given to the believer, so that, with faith and energy of soul on his side, they might be woven into the warp and woof of his every day life. This gift of the Holy Spirit is a great thing. Freedom from the law of sin and death is connected with it, and life and peace. (Romans viii. 2-6.) How different this from the frantic, agonizing struggles described in Romans vii., which end when we understand by divine teaching what is meant by being "*In Christ*," and "*In the Spirit*." "In Christ" the Christian surely is, for, having died with Christ, he has passed through death's door from under the headship of "the first man," and shares in the life of the Second, and he is no longer "in the flesh, but in the Spirit." Moreover, the believer learns that he is not only "in Christ," but that he is also a child of God. To this blessed fact the Scriptures bear abundant witness, and the Holy Spirit too witnesseth with his spirit that he is a child, never leading him to doubt his relationship, but ever to cry "Abba, Father."

Conflict, of course, there will always be; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. But we are not debtors to "the flesh" to live after it. It has no claim upon us, and we are under no obligation to yield to any of its demands.

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye

are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans vi. 14.) The principle of law is that what we are for God will determine what God will be for us. But on that ground we are wholly lost. If, on the other hand, I believe that God has loved me when there was nothing in me to love—that no good in me, either in respect of my past, present, or future life, is a motive for God's love—that He loves me simply because it was His gracious and sovereign will to do so, and that every motive for His love is therefore found in Himself—if I see that every demand of His righteousness finds its satisfaction in the precious blood of God's own Son, given in infinite love for me, then am I, as regards my conscience, under grace and not under law. It is in this holy liberty of grace that we find freedom from the dominion of sin.

And when thus free we should never forget the constant need of prayer, private prayer, and meditation on God's word. Although we have a new life and the indwelling Spirit, and are "in Christ," and are owned as God's sons, all these things are never intended to weaken in our souls the sense of our absolute dependence upon God for strength for every moment. Prayer is the expression of dependence, and in the rich pastures of divine truth we shall find food in abundance. If personal intercourse with God be not diligently maintained, if His word be neglected and His Spirit grieved, if the things of the world be loved and followed,

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though we may know our standing in Christ, our life will be like the parched places of the wilderness. There may not be the bondage of Romans vii., but there will not be the life, righteousness, and peace of Romans viii.

We have done. Whether the secret of victory is now known by you we cannot say, but it surely lies in our mixing these great truths with present faith. I say *present* faith, for the faith of yesterday will not serve for to-day. If the matter is not yet quite clear, you are cordially invited to write to the Editor of this magazine. Before doing so, however, it would be well to read the article again—carefully, and in a prayerful spirit. May God bless its perusal to the clearing away of every cloud.

## LONG DID I TOIL.

LONG did I toil, and know no earthly rest ;  
 Far did I rove, and found no certain home ;  
 At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,  
 Who opes His arms, and bids the weary come :  
 With Him I found a home, a rest divine ;  
 And I since then am His, and He is mine.

Yes ! He is mine ! and nought of earthly things,  
 Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,  
 The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,  
 Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.  
 Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine !  
 Go ! I my Saviour's am, and He is mine.

The good I have is from His stores supplied ;  
 The ill is only what He deems the best ;  
 He for my Friend, I 'm rich with nought beside ;  
 And poor without Him, though of all possest :  
 Changes may come ; I take, or I resign ;  
 Content, while I am His, while He is mine.

Whate'er may change, in Him no change is seen ;  
 A glorious Sun, that wanes not, nor declines ;  
 Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,  
 And sweetly on His people's darkness shines :  
 All may depart ; I fret not, nor repine,  
 While I my Saviour's am, while He is mine.

He stays me falling, lifts me up when down,  
 Reclaims me wandering, guards from every foe ;  
 Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown ;  
 Which in return, before His feet I throw,  
 Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,  
 Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.

While here, alas ! I know but half His love,  
 But half discern Him, and but half adore ;  
 But when I meet Him in the realms above,  
 I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,  
 And feel and tell, amid the choir divine,  
 How fully I am His, and He is mine.

HENRY FRANCIS LYTE.

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### FRAGMENT.

"PASSING from death unto life is the beginning of all holy affections. A child does not love its parents before it is born, but it does love long before it can express it."



## LOOKING, WHERE?

I WANT to address myself briefly to the question of how it is that many Christians in times of difficulty and trial find such little sustaining grace from Christ. It is, alas! anything but rare to see Christians gloomy, dejected, and cast down during such seasons. And why is this? Is it that God has ceased to be the God of *all* comfort and the Father of mercies? Is it that the blessed ascended Son of God is not our great High Priest, and is unable to succour the people of His choice? A thousand times NO. Let the tongue perish that affirms it. Never, dear troubled child of God, suffer the thin edge of such a suggestion to enter your mind.

How is it then that some Christians fear death and pass away—die—under a cloud? scarcely, alas! resigned to go, whereas the resignation should be needed rather for the staying than the going—the living than the dying. Again, how is it that when trouble and trial come, hard thoughts of God creep into the mind—often there, when one feels that to utter them would be a libel upon a Father's heart? As a Christian said to me in a very sad fashion the other day, "It's easy to talk about being sustained in your trials when you are not in them, but it's a different thing when you are."

I believe there are thousands of God's dear children in such a condition, and our heart bleeds for them. And what is the solution to the difficulty? Simply this, *Where are you looking?* Peter walked upon the tempestuous deep when he looked at Jesus, but began to sink when he looked at the waves. And so it is with us.

Now, I believe that when any of us are in the condition just described there is a reason for it. If we are in easy circumstances, without trials and pinches, and we live independently of Christ—if we satisfy ourselves with the world, with the broken cisterns around us, when we feel the reversal of circumstances, and the pinch and trial and bereavement, God, as a Father who loves His children, will suffer us to feel our weakness by allowing us to lean on a broken reed, and to be mocked by our empty cisterns. The world can give no true comfort. Our Father is infinitely tender and gracious, but His love would wean us from the world, its spirit and its creature resources.

In the Song of Solomon, when the drowsy bride at length rouses herself to seek the company of her Beloved, He had withdrawn Himself, and the search for Him was sad and shameful, but necessary.

Ah! have we not sometimes to search for Jesus? When more links have been formed with the world than with the saints of God—more care taken for what we shall eat and drink and be clothed with, than for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, no wonder that we are

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allowed to feel the emptiness and hollowness of all these things ! You may be outwardly orthodox, and go to meetings regularly, but where is your heart feeding, and where are your eyes looking ? Is your Christianity a thing of joy right through the piece—in the home circle, the business circle, the social circle ?

Well, should one reading these lines say, “ This is all true ” ; dear troubled friend, go to God and confess it all, and He will shew you His tender mercy and grace and restoring hand.

And, by the grace of God, may it be your happy portion and mine to cultivate the acquaintance of Jesus, so that, weaned from the world by the exceeding and ineffable compensation of His company, we shall, in separation of spirit, find out, in such seasons as we have been speaking of, the sustaining power of the one great High Priest—Jesus the Son of God—and learn too the infinite tenderness and comfort of the heart of the Father. “ He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ? ” (Rom. viii. 32.) “ Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Gal. vi. 7, 8.)

Again I would challenge my own heart and yours—*Looking, where ?*

A. J. P.

## HANNAH'S PRAYER AND ELI'S REPROOF.

1 SAMUEL i., ii.

IT is interesting to notice that one of the most earnest prayers that ever was offered, and which was so blessedly answered, was not heard by mortal ears at all.

Hannah's *vow* is recorded in 1 Samuel i. 11, but not the words of her prayer, and therefore they cannot be repeated. "She spake in her heart," we are told, "only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard." (v. 13.)

There are two passages in the New Testament which are strikingly illustrated in Hannah, and her prayer. One of these is in the epistle of James, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (chap. v. 13); the other is in Phil. iv. 6, 7, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything 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."

In chapter i. of the first book of Samuel the afflicted Hannah offers up her prayer to God, and in chapter ii. she sings her psalm with a merry heart, when her prayer has been heard and answered. The voice, which was unheard in the former chapter, sounds out the millennial song in the latter, commencing at the first verse and

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concluding as follows: "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed." (v. 10.) Hannah's was a God-honouring prayer, and a Christ-exalting song.

There is a vast difference between a buoyant-looking vessel waiting for cargo and one fully freighted. We, Christians, too often resemble the former. We are apt to attend the prayer-meeting and sit there as though we had scarcely anything to offer in way of thanksgiving, and but little to ask for, instead of being bowed in heart under a sense of need, and filled with expectation from God. When doubtfulness of mind takes the place of desire for blessing from God, instead of waiting upon Him we are "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed;" and the apostle adds, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." (James i. 6, 7.)

We must not suppose that God will force His gifts upon us when we have neither the heart to desire them, nor condition of soul to appreciate them. For the same apostle speaks of a class of persons that even *do* desire and yet do *not* receive—they ask, and have not, because they ask amiss, that they may consume it in their pleasures. (See James iv. 3, N.T.)

The prayer of selfishness is dishonouring to God, and the answer much more to be dreaded

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than desired. This was seen in the case of the Israelites when God "gave them their request," and, at the same time, "sent leanness into their souls" as a token of His displeasure. Hannah evidently thought of the glory of God, and of the good of His people Israel, when she poured out her soul before the Lord, and asked for a man child; and, when she obtained her request, she shewed her unselfishness by lending him to the Lord as long as he lived. She had the joy of receiving him from the Lord, and the further joy of returning him to the Lord, in addition to which she became the channel of blessing to all Israel, who profited by her prayer as long as Samuel lived. A single answer to prayer brings encouragement to the heart and increases our confidence in God, and the more others are blessed by it, the happier we are ourselves. It is the privilege of the people of God to be not only receivers of blessing in answer to prayer, but channels of blessing to all around.

How sad it is when the servants of God fail, in ministering the Word, to meet the need of souls for want of the prayers of His people to aid them. When disappointment is experienced in connection with the above we do well to ask ourselves the question, "Did I pray for a blessing on the Word? and seek to hold up the preacher's hands by the same means?" And if we fail to do so, need we wonder that the preacher could not get on, and that we did not get blessing?

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There is no class of persons on earth more dependent upon God than those that preach the Word, if they did but know and own it, and His people could but feel it. When this *is* the case the results are manifest. Not only is the preacher happy in his work, but sinners are broken down before God, and saints built up on their most holy faith through his instrumentality. Those too that have been looking to God in prayer have the joy of seeing the blessing descend. "I will therefore," says the apostle, "that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting"; and the Psalmist also says, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord." (1 Tim. ii. 8; Ps. cxxxiv. 2.) When blessing comes down thanksgiving ascends from our hearts in return; but when complaining takes the place of prayer and thanksgiving, the work of God is hindered, and our souls grow lean.

Communion with God, as well as largeness of heart, must accompany prayer, which was clearly seen in the case of Hannah. There was no person that could claim such nearness to God as Eli the priest; but, morally, Hannah was nearer the Lord than he. The rebuke which Eli ministered while Hannah was engaged in prayer shewed a lack of spiritual discernment on his part, which was treated by Hannah, not with silent contempt, but with simplicity of heart, and was responded

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to in the spirit of meekness, as follows: "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto." And Eli said, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him." (vv. 16, 17.) The one who is best able to sustain an injury is the one who is in communion with God. The nearer we are to Him the better we can bear an insult, even though it be from one of His own people, and the less likely we shall be to defend ourselves or to seek redress. Hannah was too near the Lord to retaliate, or "act in the flesh," as we say, when Eli reproved her, and far too happy when her prayer was answered to have any ill-feeling towards the high priest. But what she did is beautifully recorded in the end of chap. i. She brought the child to Eli and said, "Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him: therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there."

There was no haughtiness of spirit towards the one that had reproved her wrongfully when she offered up her prayer. But her words *shewed* him, and they shew us, that Hannah's, Eli's, and ours is both a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God.

"Israel's God is ours."

H. H.



## “YET SHALT THOU PLUNGE ME IN THE DITCH.”

“The perfect righteousness of God  
Is witnessed in the Saviour’s blood ;  
’Tis in the cross of Christ we see  
How God can save, yet righteous be.”

**Y**ES, I am converted, but I am not happy.  
I do believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and  
am saved ; and through God’s wondrous grace, in  
having given me a new nature and the Holy Spirit,  
I seek to please Him. And yet I am not happy.

Why is it ? Let me see.

Have I been to-day, this week, grieving the  
Holy Spirit ?

Through mercy God’s good hand has been over  
me, and He has kept me. I do not think this is  
the reason.

What is it ?

“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.”

“If I wash myself with snow water, and make  
my hands never so clean ; yet shalt Thou plunge  
me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor  
me.” (Job ix. 30, 31.)

What a ray of *light* from God ! How it makes  
things clear !

*I wash myself*—just what I have been doing

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every day, and day after day—and MAKE MYSELF. Yes, that's just it—make myself—what is the good?

"Yet shalt Thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Exactly; I know now why I was unhappy.

Dear reader, do you?

If so, shall we turn to what the apostle Paul says?

"Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss FOR CHRIST. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . . that I may *win Christ*, and be found in Him, not having *mine own* righteousness, *which is of the law*, but the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ." (Phil. iii. 6-8; Rom. iii. 22.)

And if you *count all* things dung that you may win Christ; and if thus you let go your "filthy rags" (Isaiah lxiv. 6) you too may find Christ as your righteousness, upon whom hangs all the glory of His Father's house. He is fastened "as a nail in a sure place; and He shall be for a glorious throne to His Father's house." (Isaiah xxii. 23.)

"For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness." (Psalm cvii. 9.)

May you find it so, dear friend, for His name and glory's sake.

M. L. F.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. S. Hobart.—The profession of arms hardly seems in harmony with “the gospel of peace.” We have known, however, many in both branches of the service whose lives have been a beautiful witness for Christ—dear, devoted men whose faith and zeal we would wish to follow. Still this in no way proves the calling to be one which a follower of Him, whose kingdom is not of this world, could happily enter. Possibly in many instances, perhaps in most, their conversion has taken place after joining the service and the way out of it has not been clear, even if the heart has been exercised about it. There we must leave the matter, for to his own Master each one stands or falls.

Hebrews v. 7.—This passage refers to what the Lord Jesus passed through in the garden of Gethsemane. The answer to His prayer is seen in His resurrection. He was saved “*out of*” death (see marginal reading of the Revised Version), not “*from*” it, in being raised from among the dead by the mighty power of God.

T. S. Hebrews vi. 1–12.—In studying this epistle it is well to remember that it was addressed in the first instance to Hebrew Christians, or at least to Hebrews who had entered the circle of Christian profession and whose personal profession of Christianity was taken as sincere, and as the fruit of the Spirit’s work unless time should prove it to have been otherwise. It is evident from sundry warnings in different parts of the epistle that the apostle perceived signs of declension here and there, and a disposition to return to the Jewish system out of which they were being led by Christian truth. Accordingly, in the first place he encourages them to go on to perfection—to that which belongs to “full growth,” for such is the meaning of

“perfection” here. Milk for babes and solid food for full-grown men. Now the solid food was found in Christianity, not in Judaism; and to cling to the latter though it had in it divine elements, was to remain in an infantile state. Hence the encouragement to go on, and the apostle himself being a Hebrew says, “And this will we do, if God permit.” The elements of which we speak are found in verses 1 and 2. In the two following verses the privileges of the Christian circle are stated, which it is supposed a person might share in, and come under the power of, to a certain degree without being saved at all. Such a case, I say, is supposed rather than assumed to be actually existing. If then a Hebrew did thus “fall away” and took sides again—openly and deliberately—with those of his own nation who had “killed the Prince of Life” by doing so he crucified for himself the Son of God and made a show of Him. Such conduct was a mark of hopeless apostasy from which there was no recall. All such persons were like ground which drank in the rain that came oft upon it but yielded in return nothing but thorns and briars. “But,” adds the apostle “we are persuaded better things of you, and *things that accompany salvation*, though we thus speak.”

S. H. G. Romans vii. 25.—See “Victory over Sin” in our present issue. The law of God is what is commonly called the Ten Commandments, and “the law of sin” the working of that evil principle within called “sin in the flesh.” Now, though we are not under law, yet the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. With reference to John iii. 6, we take the words to mean that the life begotten in the soul by the Holy Spirit is of the nature of the One who begets it. This, however, must be carefully distinguished from the indwelling of the Spirit, which is another matter altogether. We reserve the rest for our next number.

## UNCHANGING LOVE.

### A WORD ON BACKSLIDING.

I DESIRE to say a few words on the subject of "Backsliding," and it is my earnest prayer that God may use them for blessing to any poor backslider into whose hands they come, no matter whether he be nursing his misery in secret, or shamelessly flaunting his fall before the eyes of others.

Now there are two classes of backsliders, and we must carefully distinguish between them, or we shall fall into a hopeless fog in speaking of this subject.

#### **The first class**

consists of persons who have been truly converted to God—no thanks to themselves, but all praise to the grace that has saved them. They belong to Christ, they are HIS SHEEP, and He has pledged His word that they shall never perish. Moreover, being born again, they have received from God a new life, with holy and God-ward desires, though they still have the old evil nature within. The Holy Spirit too dwells in them, to guide them and to produce in them joy and peace and other blessed fruit according to Galatians v. 22.

As long as they went on in obedience and in dependence upon God all was well; but in an unguarded moment, they listened to a

suggestion of Satan. They allowed their old, corrupt nature to act, and the devil, seeing his advantage, led them farther and farther from the right path. The Holy Spirit in them is now necessarily grieved; their happiness is gone, and they are of all men the most miserable. Instead of going and pouring out the whole sad story in confession to God their Father, it is possible that they go from bad to worse, till men point at them, and say, "Can such be really Christians?"

But mark, although all this be true of them, the safety of their souls, blessed be God, remains intact, for *that* depends on the work which Christ did on their behalf upon the cross, and upon His gracious determination to have His sheep in spite of everything. Their joy has given place to wretchedness, and their walk, instead of bringing glory to God, now reflects dishonour upon His blessed name; but no change in them can undo that atoning work, or shake the foundation on which they stand. The Holy Spirit does not leave them, but seeks to bring home to their consciences the greatness of their sin, and to fill them with sorrow for the grief that they have caused to the heart of Him who, having loved "His own," loves them unto the end.

David may serve as an example of this kind of backslider. Though a true saint of God, yet he fell into terrible sin. Did he therefore need to be saved over again? Had he to pray to God to

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restore salvation to him? No; for he had not lost that. What he *had* lost was his *joy*; so he prays, in Psalm li., "Restore unto me *the joy* of Thy salvation."

**The second class**

consists, not of erring children of God, but of unconverted people, still on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. They have never really come to Christ as lost sinners, and their Christianity has been nothing more than an outward profession.

Maybe, at some time of revival, excitement leads them to take their place among the converts. For a time everything goes smoothly with them. They receive the congratulations of Christian friends, they are well spoken of by all, and are perhaps held up as patterns to others. Like the stony ground hearers in the parable of "the Sower," when the word of the gospel is sown they at once receive it with joy; but they have no root, nor depth of earth, and so they endure but for awhile. Their hearts have not been touched, nor their consciences reached. Having never heard the life-giving voice of the Son of God, they are still "dead in trespasses and sins," and it is easy for them to fall away. Do they then lose salvation? *No; for they never possessed it!*

It is quite possible to enjoy Christian privileges, and move in the circle of the church of God, without ever being born again.

I believe that this is a state especially common among

**The sons and daughters of Christian parents.**

They have much to be thankful for—a father's prayers, a mother's pious teaching, opportunities of hearing the gospel. In some cases, when quite young, the influences which surround them imperceptibly affect them. They experience a certain pleasure in listening to the stories of the love and grace of Jesus from their mothers' lips. They take an interest in reading the Bible, and through the goodness of God they are shielded from much that is outwardly bad. Thus they grow up, breathing the atmosphere of a Christian home, and influenced by Christian surroundings.

By-and-by, however, they are grown up, and are no longer children. The world begins to spread its charms before them. There is the rush of business life; there is the gay society of godless companions. They begin to think that the notions which prevail in the old home are narrow and Puritanical, and they pride themselves on their greater "breadth of mind." Satan gets the thin edge of the wedge into their soul, and then with sledge-hammer force he drives it farther and farther in. Early impressions wear off. Perhaps they begin to harbour doubts as to whether after all the Bible is really the inspired word of God. They yield first to one temptation, and then to another. They have never really



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drunk for themselves of the Water of Life; they have never had personally to do with God about their sins; they have never put themselves into the hands of Christ for safety, so they fall an easy prey to the great destroyer of men, who gives them the tinsel and trash of this world's pleasures in exchange for their never-dying souls.

Are there among my readers any that answer to this description? Any unconverted member of a Christian household? Any unsaved son or daughter of Christian parents?

If so, let me plead with you. Are all those privileges, those prayers of your mother, those warnings of your father, those opportunities of hearing the gospel, to go for nothing? Will you insist upon going to hell in spite of all? Will you press on right in the teeth of the goodness and love of God?

Oh, young man! oh, young woman! the road to hell is hard! It is a hard road over a father's entreaties and a mother's prayers; a hard road when the gospel is ringing in your ears all along the way, but I know of nothing that makes the way to hell so hard as the fact that it lies right athwart the love of God!

I would like to believe that you are not quite so callous and indifferent as you appear. Perhaps down deep in your heart you have a longing for something better and holier than the things which now absorb your attention. Is it not true that

sometimes, when you think of the happiness which others have found in Christ, the hot, scalding tears rise unbidden to your eyes, and you long with intense desire to have a share in the same.

Well, you need not despair! That happiness for which you long may yet be yours.

“Oh, if to Jesus you'll repair,  
You'll find eternal comfort there!”

He has invited you often, and He invites you again. He invites you now, as you read these lines. Oh, pause, and before reading another sentence look up and say from the depths of your heart, “O Lamb of God, I come! I come to Thee! I come now! I come as I am!”

But there is the other class of backsliders of which I have spoken—those that *have* come to Him beyond doubt, and received eternal forgiveness from Him, but who have grown cold in heart, and perhaps fallen into open sin, losing their joy, though not their salvation.

I desire to deal with their case a little more in detail; but before I go on let me try to make

### **The Difference Between the Two Sorts**

of backsliders quite clear by means of a simple illustration.

Let us pay a visit, in thought, to a farmyard. Everyone seems busy, and as we observe the farmer hurrying about, giving directions first to

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one and then to another, we cannot help thinking that there is something unusual going on.

On our enquiring as to the cause of the bustle, the farmer tells us that the "*County Cattle and Live Stock Show*" is to be held to-morrow, and that he and his men are engaged in preparing and decorating some very fine sheep and pigs which are to be sent there.

He invites us to walk round the yard. In one place the sheep are being prepared, in another the pigs. One specially fine sow attracts our notice. She was wallowing in the mire just previously, but the good scrubbing she has undergone has removed all the traces of dirt, and she now looks beautifully clean.

The next morning the party starts for the show. All goes well for a time, and then one of the sheep falls into a ditch full of mud. Oh, how miserable it is, and how piteously it bleats! Its nature abhors filth, and it is not happy till it is rescued.

A little farther on, the sow that we had noticed at the farm gets into the ditch. Unlike the sheep, it rejoices in being there. It grunts with delight. All its washing and decorating has not altered its nature, nor changed it into a sheep. It is still a sow, and likes to be back in the dirt from whence it came.

Now for the application of all this. The sheep, which bleats piteously when it falls into the mud,

is like the backsliding child of God—filled with misery till he has confessed it all to his Father.

The sow that was washed, returning to its wallowing in the mire, is like those who have undergone an external change, but who have never been turned into sheep. They may have donned the blue ribbon, inscribed their names on the roll of church membership, and left off their openly wicked ways; but reformation is not conversion. Persons of this description have been, not *converted* for ever, but only *diverted* for a time from their wicked ways, and they generally appear sooner or later in their true colours.

The 22nd verse of 2 Peter ii. speaks of this class of backsliders—unconverted sinners who return to their uncleanness like dogs and swine.

In John x. 27-30 we read, not of dogs and swine, but of *sheep*—of people who by simple faith in the blessed Saviour have been made His sheep, and though, alas! such may fall into the very same sins as an unconverted man, and to all outward appearance there may seem to be no difference between them, yet there is all the while this important difference, that in the one case it is a *sheep*, and in the other a *sow*, that falls into the mud.

It is marvellous how slow people are to perceive this. A lady in Lancashire said to me, “I cannot understand that tenth of John. In 2 Peter ii. it speaks of the sow that was washed returning to

her wallowing in the mire, yet in John x. it says 'they shall never perish.'"

"Pardon me," I replied, "but it says no such thing. It says the *sheep* of Christ shall never perish, but it says nothing about the *sow*."

"I never saw the difference between the two before," she exclaimed in wonder.

Perhaps not; but I trust every reader of this magazine sees the difference by this time.

Now it is my desire to say a little to any dear sheep of Christ who may have wandered from the green pastures and the still waters of communion with Him.

First of all, I would call your attention to what the faithful Shepherd says about His sheep in the tenth of John. Kindly open your Bible, and read from the 27th to the 30th verse.

Here we have a most absolute statement from the mouth of Christ Himself that

**His Sheep shall never Perish.**

No might of man or demon can touch them; none can pluck them from His grasp.

Examine these verses carefully.

Verse 27 shows us that it is of the *sheep* that Christ is speaking.

Verse 28 tells us that the sheep are in His own hand.

Verse 29 that they are in His Father's hand.

Verse 30 that the two hands are everlastingly joined in one.

And where are you? Between the two hands? In the united grip of God the Father and God the Son! The unity of the Godhead must be broken before the feeblest, most faltering, and most faulty sheep of Christ can be plucked from those hands! Oh, what security!

Oh, get this firmly fixed in your soul, my brother, that of *you* the words are said, "Shall never perish." Pillow your doubting, sore-distressed heart upon those words. The Shepherd has spoken; He has declared His ability to preserve His sheep right through to the end. His credit would suffer if one, even the feeblest, were to be lost. Thank God for such assurance!—"Shall never perish!"

Still it is possible, as I have already said, for a sheep of Christ to wander from the Shepherd's side, and to be caught by the wolf, as you will see if you refer to the 12th verse of the tenth of John. They cannot lose their security, but they may, and often do, lose their communion and their joy. Alas! such a state is only too common. I have not the slightest doubt but that among the readers of these lines there are *many* in a cold, backsliding state. You may not have gone so far as to fall into open sin. Externally you may appear just the same, as you have always been since your conversion, but *inwardly* there has been

#### A Change for the Worse.

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You no longer take the same delight in the study of God's word and in prayer. You do not enjoy the company of those who speak of Christ to you as you once did. Doubtless you can remember the time when the first flush of joy, consequent upon your conversion, filled your soul. You could perhaps tell the story of that memorable hour as if it were but yesterday.

You had made the discovery that you were a sinful creature on the road to hell. You knew that Christ, and Christ alone, could meet your need. You fled to Him for refuge, and you found Him ready, yes, waiting to receive you. He gave you the warmest of welcomes. He breathed into your ears sweet words of forgiveness and love, and you were filled with "joy and peace in believing." You remember the sweetness of the love which you then tasted. You remember how precious Christ was to you then. You were so happy that you expected never to have a miserable moment again.

What a difference between THEN and NOW! You feel, perhaps, that you can hardly be the same person. Your joy is gone, your love has grown cold, and your poor heart is so dark and desolate. You may seem bright and happy to others, and perhaps you do your best to persuade yourself that you *are* happy, but is it not true that there are times when you feel that you would give all you possess to get back those blessed seasons of joy and communion?

Well, I do not think you will ever get right with God again till you go to the *root* of what has led you wrong. Oh, start off at once in pursuit of the thief that has robbed you of your joy! Seek to get at the why and the wherefore of your unhappy, backsliding state.

I believe that in every case of backsliding

### **The Process is Gradual.**

You did not arrive at your present condition of soul all at once. You got there by degrees. The first downward step was perhaps only a very small thing; the neglect maybe of the daily reading of the scriptures and of private prayer. But whatever it was, and however insignificant, you must drag it into the light, and judge yourself unsparingly for having allowed it.

Now just turn for a moment to Luke xxii. I think we may learn an important lesson from some of the details of Peter's history which are given us there. Notice first of all that his declension was a gradual one. He did not go straight out from the Lord's presence and deny his Master with oaths and curses. He reached that stage by degrees. Let us look at the six successive steps in this sad history:

(1) Verse 33. Here we have the first step in Peter's declension. We find him trusting to his own strength instead of to Christ's.

(2) Verse 45. He is now sleeping when he



ought to have been praying. The Lord had said just before, "*Pray* that ye enter not into temptation"; but Peter did not heed that word, and did not pray.

How often people to-day are like him. They begin by trusting in their own power for a Christian walk, and soon go on, like Peter, to neglect of the Word and prayer.

(3) Verse 50. Here Peter is smiting when he ought to have been suffering; seeking to make up for his lack of watchfulness by fleshly activity; like many to-day who try to counter-balance the effects of their backsliding state of soul by increased activity in so-called Christian work, preaching the gospel, teaching in the Sunday-school, and so on.

(4) Verse 54. Peter is lagging behind, following "afar off." Distance has come in between himself and the Lord.

(5) Verse 55. He is now sitting down with the enemies of Christ, warming himself at their fire, finding a theme in common with those whose hearts are filled with hatred towards Him.

(6) Verse 57. Here the climax is reached, and he openly denies his Master. I believe God often allows a backsliding Christian thus to fall into open sin, in order to bring him to his senses, and show him the state of his soul, as He did in Peter's case.

But there is another thing that we may learn

from this account of Peter, and that is, HOW HE GOT RESTORED, restored to happy, blessed communion with the Lord.

I want to call the reader's attention to this.

### **God's Way of Restoring the Backslider.**

It is of all importance that you should get hold of the truth as to this point. The lack of it may keep you from restoration for many a long year. At the same time you may know all about it in your head, and yet remain unrestored.

It is not that you have to come again to Jesus as a lost sinner needing salvation. Nor have you again to seek cleansing in the precious blood of Christ. That blood has set you free, once for all, from hell and judgment; and there can be no such thing as a fresh blood-shedding, or a fresh application of the blood to your soul.

Just look now and see how Peter got restored. There were two instruments which the Lord used to bring about his recovery. You find them in verse 61 of Luke xxii. (1) "The Lord turned and *looked* upon Peter, and (2) Peter remembered the *word*." It was the *look of love* that broke his heart, and it was the remembrance of the *word* that did the work of restoration in his soul. Dear reader, it is those two things that you need—the *look* and the *word*.

Oh, backsliding Christian, turn your gaze upward and behold the face of Jesus! In spite

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of all your wandering, your sin, your ingratitude, He has never ceased to look upon you with unchanging love. He has longed for your return. His heart is full of love for you. Oh, how sorely grieved that heart of His must be to behold the way you have treated His love, as if it were a thing of no value and of no account! And yet He loves you, and will do so to the end.

“His is an unchanging love,  
Higher than the heights above,  
Deeper than the depths beneath,  
Free and faithful, strong as death.”

Or, to put it in the words of scripture, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” No wonder Peter’s heart was broken! The wonder is that *yours* has not been so long before now!

The work of restoration which took place in Peter’s soul comes out in a fuller way in John xxi. Peter had warmed himself by the world’s fire on that sad night. “Come,” says the Lord, as it were, in John xxi., “warm yourself by *My* fire, Peter; taste the love of *My* heart.” The Lord had prepared a fire of coals, and by the side of that fire, the fire of love, when Peter was basking in all the warmth of it, the Lord probes him through and through with His searching *word*. “Lovest thou Me?” He asks three times over, and the question shows how keenly He had felt Peter’s lack of love.

Oh, friend, He feels the same towards you, and invites you to come and warm yourself by the fire of His love. Will you do so? You will find great blessing in turning to those scriptures that speak of His unchanging, faithful love, and reading them upon your knees.

The first verse of John xiii. is a fire that I have got many a good warming by. The end of Romans viii. is another such fire. As we read, the Lord uses *the word* to restore our souls.

This He does in His blessed character of Advocate. If you turn to 1 John ii. you read there, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." It does not say, "If any man confess his sin, we have an Advocate," but "If any man sin." That is, as soon as a child of God takes a step away from Him, the blessed Lord is at once engaged as Advocate on his behalf. And when he returns, and confesses his sin and folly, his confession (as well as the cleansing and restoration that follow) is the result of the advocacy.

It was just the same in Peter's case. Long before he began to descend the hill of declension with such rapid strides the Lord tells him, "*I have prayed for thee.*"

The result of Christ's advocacy up there on our behalf is, that our hearts are touched and melted by the thought of His love, and that we are led to judge ourselves unsparingly, and to

go to the Father in confession of our waywardness and sin. We then receive forgiveness from Him, and *His Word* is applied to our souls in cleansing and restoring power, and the Holy Ghost uses it to fill us once again with joy and comfort.

But there is an old proverb which says,

**“Prevention is Better than Cure,”**

and God has given us His word not only as a remedy when we have been defiled by sin, but also as a preventive against sin. So, in that passage to which I referred in John’s epistle, we read (chap. ii. 1), “These things write I unto you [it is *what is written*, His word] *that ye sin not.*”

We have the same two things in Psalm cxix. First of all, “*Thy Word* have I hid in mine heart, *that I might not sin against Thee.*” That is “Prevention.” Then, in v. 9, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to *Thy Word.*” That is “Cure.” In each case *the Word* is what is used, but remember that “Prevention is better than cure!”

Dear reader, if you would be kept walking close to God, make it your daily practice to read His Word. Read it whenever you can, and seek that the Holy Ghost may graciously shed His light upon its pages. Meditate upon it, feed on it, make it part of yourself, and it will turn you from being a miserable backslider into a happy, useful Christian.

Oh that such a change might take place this very day ! O backsliding child of God, do you not hear the home-call of your Father ? "Come," He says, "Come, and let Me shower the love of My heart upon you."

Will you not come back to Him ?

*Come for your own sake !* Think of the blessing, the joy, the sweetness you are missing. Think of the glorious possibilities that are within your reach !

*Come for the sake of others !* Be no longer a wall for the devil to post his placards upon ! Be no longer a stone over which sinners may stumble to hell !

But, most of all,

*Come for Christ's sake !* Think how His heart yearns over you ! Think how you are robbing Him of His portion and joy in you ! Think how keenly He feels your indifference ! Remember what He said to His backsliding sheep in Isa. i., "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider."

How pathetic ! What sorrowful tenderness there is in these words ! God grant that they may melt your heart.

H. P. B.

## FOUND AND CARRIED HOME.

LUKE xv. 1-7.

THE sweet story of God's grace which opens the well-known chapter (Luke xv.) may be put under four simple words—Lost, found, carried home.

1. LOST. “That which is *lost*.” It is a solemn thing to have sinned, and in our sinfulness to be at a distance from God; but the solemnity is deepened as we think of being *lost* in that distance. As the silly sheep wanders to a distance, but has no knowledge, wisdom, or power to set itself right—nay, may even bound away from the one who seeks it—so were we as sinners in regard to God. We had not even the desire to set ourselves right with Him, much less the knowledge of how it could be done, or the ability to accomplish it. This was our solemn condition, and it might have been rendered eternal by our passing from time into eternity had not the grace of our God intervened. Let us then tell of the intervention of that grace, and in doing this our next word serves us well.

2. FOUND. “Doth [he] not . . . go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath *found* it.” The wandering and losing is on the part of the sheep; the going after it and

finding is the part of him to whom it belongs. It is precious to him, spite of its wandering, and he rests not without seeking, nor slacks his search until he finds. How touchingly this speaks to our hearts of the grace that sought and found us! These words are the Lord's vindication of that grace. The Pharisees and scribes despised Him because He received sinners. He shows them in reply that not merely does He receive them, but He seeks them. And He puts the question to them in His words, "What man of *you*?" Would they not so act in the case of any thing that was of value to them? Yet they would deny to the blessed God the right to seek after His poor creatures ruined and estranged from Him by sin. Poor, cold hearts, how far they were from understanding the thoughts of God's heart towards man! *Their* thought was that of exalting themselves by their own religion, and it seemed as if, in the case of wretched sinners like these being received, all their religion went for nothing. God wronged them not; they should have all the true value of their religion tried by unerring judgment; but *His* thought, into which they could not enter, was to bring back to Himself the poor wanderers, and to satisfy His own love in their endless blessing before Him.

He sought then, for He had the right to seek, and none could deny it Him. But, oh, the moral glory of that search! A lowly Man among men,



acquainted with grief; the light of His presence ever exposing sin, yet the grace of His heart ever attracting the repentant sinner; by what marvellous ways did He break the heart on account of its own perfect wretchedness, and yet bind it and heal it by His own gracious fulness! How we should wonder at the records of Luke, who tells us so fully of these searchings and findings of divine grace, had we not experienced it for ourselves! But each believer can speak of the grace that sought and found him; can tell of ways which God in His perfect wisdom adopted and pursued until we found ourselves in the hands of the precious Saviour.

Yet some Pharisees and scribes may still say, Is it consistent with the holiness of God that sinners should be received? If grace is the expression of what is in God's heart for us, it must bear the impress of His own nature and character. God cannot be inconsistent with Himself. Grace cannot be opposed to the truth of His holy being. It is in the cross of Christ that all this is set forth and confirmed to us. There was the perfect expression of God's infinite holiness, inasmuch as the holy Victim suffering for sin was forsaken of God. Yet He was given of God to this end, and was in that sacrifice, as well as through the whole of His spotless life, the expression to us of the boundless grace of God. It is through His death every blessing flows to us.

God has no fellowship with iniquity. He has judged and condemned it most completely. And now through Him, in whose person sin was condemned, flow all the blessings which infinite grace bestows.

As the sheep wearied with its wanderings and strugglings simply submitted to the hands of him who found it, so have we found peace and rest in simply trusting in the precious Saviour in whom God's grace is to us displayed. The toil, the suffering for sin, the grace of seeking and finding are all His; it is ours simply to be found of Him in our weariness and woe, and to enter into peace and joy in His blessed hands.

3. CARRIED. "And when he hath found it, *he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*" It is thus perfectly secure, for He now holds it in His care. It is sweet to think of ourselves secure in His tender care. It is not that He shews us the road home and bids us take it and wander no more, but He carries us, He holds us in His own keeping. We have no power; we have still evil within and foes without; there is a resistless enemy who seeks by all means to overcome God's people. What should we do if left to ourselves? But we are not so left, we are in His care who is able to save to the uttermost. How sweet it is to realise that our security in no way depends upon ourselves, but wholly on Him who found us and who now carries us.

Yet some will say, We are so weak. It is perfectly true; indeed of ourselves we have no strength at all. But it does not require strength to be carried. In that case all the strength is that of the One who bears us. What then is our part? To be content to be carried in our own conscious strengthlessness. To feel moment by moment our entire dependence on Him. To take up no matter, whether we deem it great or small, as if we were sufficient of ourselves for it. To refer everything to Him, gaining knowledge, wisdom, and strength from Him. As we do so we shall surely exclaim, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee!"

Then, further, if He holds us thus in His keeping, and dependent on His own wisdom and strength, by this means He secures our nearness to Himself, that we may have the joy of His company and He that of ours. We cannot do without Him, and He would not do without us. Thus we find ourselves in sweet intimacy with Him. Our very trials and woes minister to it, because they remind us of our dependence on Him, and we prove the sufficiency of His grace for us. Thus our hearts, learning what He is towards us, become the more attached to Him. The most dreary waste is cheered by His smile, the greatest darkness is lit up by the light of His presence, the deepest grief is assuaged by His sympathy, and the saddest void is filled

with His divine affections. How sweet to learn Him thus!

Not only does He shew Himself equal to our circumstances, and able to lift our hearts above the pressure of them, but by His precious communications He brings us to taste the blessedness of that place where He is. As we become familiar with Himself we become familiar with the place where He is, for He is the light and the glory of that place. And what place is this? One word describes it:

4. "HOME." "And when He cometh *home*." Many times have we sung, and rejoiced in the grace so far expressed—

"To His *fold* He safely brought us."

Yet, blessed as it might be thought to be in *His* fold, the Lord speaks nothing of it, but tells of *home*. Whose home? His own, which is filled with His own joy, a joy shared by "friends and neighbours," those who love Him and are near to Him. Yet He gives this sweet indication that the object of His grace—sought, found, and borne by Him—is brought to share His own home, and to have part in the endless joy which grace produces. There He will rest in His love, and exult in the satisfaction of His grace. Our rest will be with Him, our deepest joy and satisfaction His own.

It is our eternity. Yet even now faith catches

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the brightness and blessedness of it all and lives in it. It is our earnest desire that each beloved reader may do so. Our blessing begins in the deeply solemn knowledge of our estrangement from God with all its terrible consequences, for in that place we learn the grace that seeks and finds us and brings us home to God. Yet too many are content to know that they are secure for eternity under the care of that precious Saviour, and do not go on to learn what that Saviour is in Himself, or gain from intimacy with Him a knowledge of the blessed place to which He brings us. Let it not be so, but let each taste of His grace awaken the desire to know it more, that daily we may become more at home with Him, and consequently more at home (before we actually reach it) in the place where He is.

J. R.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. H. G.—When a person is quickened he is certainly born again, and when anyone is born again he is certainly quickened; for both terms, as we understand them, refer to the giving of life. But to be “born again” and to be “quickened together with Christ” are terms by no means equivalent. In bygone days of patriarchs and prophets men were born again—it was an absolute necessity if any were to be eternally blessed—but they could not have been spoken of as “quickened together with Christ.” Such language could only be used this side of His resurrection. For

a fuller unfolding of the subject see an article entitled "*Divine Quickening*" in No. 85 of this magazine.

E. G. (Ephesians ii. 1).—The words "dead in trespasses and sins" describe the condition of the Ephesian saints before they were the subjects of God's quickening power. In that terrible condition all men still are who have not passed from death unto life.

Yes; the last verse of Ephesians ii. views the Church as a building complete, and in which God now dwells by His Spirit.

V. T. (2 Peter ii. 20–22).—If you read the whole chapter carefully you will see that the apostle is warning the Hebrew Christians against false teachers who would bring in among God's professing people "damnable heresies," even as there had been false prophets in Israel to whom many had lent an ear to their own confusion. Now, as in old time, God had not spared the angels who had sinned, nor the world before the flood, nor the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, neither would He spare these evil men. Let, then, true Christians be on their guard, and let them continually look to the Lord, who knows how to deliver the godly in the hour of danger and temptation. But as "he is not a Jew that is one outwardly," neither is he a Christian that is one outwardly. Many might join the Christian ranks and take the Christian name who were never born again—never saved at all. Their connection with Christianity, however, and with its holy teaching, would necessarily effect a change in their outward life, and separate them for the time being from the pollution of the world. But mere knowledge is not life. If, then, after knowing the way of righteousness, and knowing much of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they again became entangled and overcome, their latter end would be worse than the beginning. Knowing the good and yet turning to the evil is worse than if the good had never been

known. In all such cases is seen the truth of the ancient proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Now it is evident that God's children, having divine life and the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, are not in question here. These, as far as we are aware, are never likened to such unclean creatures as dogs and sows. Moreover, of His sheep it is said, that they shall never perish, nor shall any catch them out of His hand. No power shall so prevail against Christ as to deprive Him of His sheep given to Him of His Father. His they are, and He will keep them at all costs.

Hebrews vi. you will find dealt with in the correspondence of last month.

T. M., ROTHBURY.—When speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ it is always well to keep, as far as we can, to the very words of scripture. Now we are told that "Christ died for our sins," and He who did thus die is both God and man in one blessed person. To separate His deity from His humanity is to deprive His sacrifice of its atoning character, for the glory and excellency of His person gave worth to the sacrifice He offered. Besides, in John iii. 16 it is the only begotten Son of God who is given, so in 1 John iv. 9. In Galatians ii. 20, it is "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me," and if we are reconciled to God it is by the death of His Son. (Rom. v. 10.) Of course, the humanity of the Lord is a very precious thing, and having assumed it He will never lay it down, for He is a Man upon the throne in heaven to-day, though He be over all, God blessed for ever. Many unspeakably precious truths are connected with the manhood of the Lord Jesus, and while the Christian would jealously guard that, he would defend His absolute deity with no less jealous

care. He was always and everywhere God, even when in grace and for the accomplishment of the divine purposes He was a man in human circumstances here below. The person of the Son is an unfathomable mystery, and none but the Father knows it. (Matt. xi. 27.) Oh, let us beware how we speak of it, lest we utter unguarded words that would tarnish His glory!

A LOVER OF SIMPLE TRUTH.—If under the law the children of Israel were admonished to open their hand wide to their poor brother, surely we who are under grace should not do less. Hearty, generous care for Christ's poor is a sweet characteristic of the divine nature. It is a sorry sign when Christians can surround themselves with the luxuries of life, and leave the care of the poor to the parish authorities.

As to your second question, we cannot discuss in these pages particular cases of discipline about which we know absolutely nothing.

H. DE P., SUFFOLK.—If the Bride, the Lamb's wife, be the Church, and the Church only, as we believe, then it is certain the saints of Old Testament times belong not to that company which holds so privileged and so dear a place. It was not till the work of atonement had been done, and Christ had ascended, and the Holy Spirit come down, that the Church actually began. If this be so, then it follows that the saints of earlier days form no part of it. They will have their own blessed place in heavenly glory, and be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb as friends of the Bridegroom. (Compare Rev. xix. 9 with John iii. 29.)

As to Ezekiel xxi. 10, we are inclined to the thought that "My son" in this passage has reference to Israel. (See Exodus iv. 22; Hosea xi. 1.) We speak, however, with a measure of reserve.

J. J.—Thank you for your "New Song," but, alas! we cannot use a tenth of the poetry sent us.



## PAST AND FUTURE SINS.

MANY honest and exercised souls fear to *rest simply upon the plain statements of* Scripture, that our sins are forgiven for Christ's name's sake when we believe, fearing that they may sin again. Hence they are strangers to peace. Others in their zeal to help souls in this condition proclaim that all the believer's sins are forgiven—past, present, and future. Now, though it is quite true that the believer is justified from all things, and that no charge can ever be laid against him, yet to speak of the present forgiveness of future sins is hardly in the line of Holy Scripture. It is a wrong remedy for the condition we have described. It satisfies but few, and gives that few a peace that rests on an unscriptural basis. Human reasoning on the word of God is always at fault. We need to gather His own thoughts from His own word, which abideth for ever. This alone gives settled peace to the soul.

The word of God states, plainly and unequivocally, that the sins of every believer are forgiven—freely, fully, and eternally. For instance, "Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke vii. 48); "Your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12); "In whom we have redemption through His

blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians i. 7); "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews x. 17.) But it nowhere speaks of the forgiveness of *future* sins, for the simple reason that it is never supposed the Christian will sin in the future. He may, and if he should there is provision for it, as we shall show. The thought itself is a mere human one, outside Scripture, and only tends to confuse.

"But," says someone, "I cannot understand about the sins which I commit after I believe. I see the Scripture says that the believer's sins are forgiven, but my difficulty is that I keep on sinning. I break down day by day, and say and do things which I ought not, get a bad conscience, and then I begin to doubt whether I am forgiven at all. And hence, if my sins are not forgiven—past, present, and future—how am I to enjoy peace?"

"Well, dear friend, this is no uncommon experience, and we would seek to help you from the Word. When a self-judged sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ his sins are forgiven, all forgiven freely, on the ground of His finished work, and God will remember them no more. He employs in His grace many striking figures to show how completely the believer's sins are got rid of for ever. They are forgiven, covered (Rom. iv. 7), blotted out (Isaiah xlv. 22), removed (Psalm

ciii. 12), behind His back (Isaiah xxxviii. 17), cast into the depths of the sea. (Micah vii. 19.) Now do you believe that? Do you take Him at His word? Will you rest in childlike simplicity of faith on the plain and eternal statements of Him who cannot lie? Your sins are forgiven, cancelled, blotted out, gone for ever, all of them. 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.'" (1 John i. 7.)

"Well, but how about the future?"

"Stay, what have you to do with the future? How do you know that you will have a future? How do you know that you will live another moment to commit any more sins? Where does Scripture speak about future sins? The first deeply important matter is, If the Lord were to come this moment, or death were to suddenly overtake you, *are your sins forgiven?* If so, you would be with Him. And not only so, but when we have received the forgiveness of sins, God also gives us the Holy Ghost, and He witnesses with our spirit that we are the children of God. (Romans viii. 16.) Now when we have become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, with all our sins forgiven for His name's sake, *we ought not to sin any more.* Believers in Christ are viewed of God as *dead to sin* (the evil root principle in us that brings forth the evil fruit, *sins*), and we are *to reckon ourselves* dead to it. (Romans vi. 6-11.) And when we so do, sin in

us is kept in abeyance, and does not manifest itself. And further, reckoning ourselves also alive to God in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit dwelling in us, *there is power* to live to God without sinning. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." (Galatians v. 25.) "Walk in the Spirit, and *ye shall not*" (or in no way) "fulfil the lust of the flesh." (Galatians v. 16.) And "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

But as the flesh is still in us, characterized by sin, and will surely remain in us till we leave this world, we need to watch and pray and walk in communion with and in dependence on God day by day, lest the enemy of our souls should tempt us, and find a response in us through the flesh and the presence of sin. We are forgiven, saved, and saved from sin's mastery, to sin no more; but having sin still in us, liable to sin, if we do not watch. And if we are unwatchful, and sin, you will say, What then? The answer is simple and plain in the word of God, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John ii. 1.) And "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.)

Unconverted, we sinned as enemies of God; reconciled, we are His children, and if we now

sin it is as His children, in relation to and in full favour with Him. Is not this still worse? If my enemy acts evilly against me, it is not surprising, but I do not expect it from my child whom I love. Sinners in the world, full of enmity against God, sin against Him, and go on sinning till death comes—and judgment comes after. (Heb. ix. 27.) Believers, children of God, are called to enjoy the Father's love, and to refuse sin, and to have nothing to say to it.

But if I fail so to do, am unwatchful and sin, what is the result? My relationship of child is untouched, and the Father's love towards me unchanged, but I get a bad conscience, and lose my enjoyment of it. I am out of communion with Him, *a naughty child*. The question of my eternal forgiveness, justification, and relationship remains intact, for that is all based *upon the finished work of Christ*, which remains intact, and my acceptance is in Him, in all the fragrance of His person, who is ever before God as the accepted Man. But I have sinned, who ought not to sin; I have done that which the world does; I have allowed that which cost my Saviour His own life's blood; I have grieved Him, have a bad conscience, and am unhappy. How is happiness to be restored? *By the confession of sins*. Many pray God to pardon them with the thought of getting off the consequences of their failure. This is very low ground. The Word says, "*If we confess*

*our sins,*" &c. True confession involves self-judgment. This is what God seeks. If I sin in relationship with God I have an advocate. I do not lose my Saviour (He abides my Saviour still), but He is my advocate with the Father, with the One with whom I am in relationship as child. And the Spirit applying the Word to my conscience, exercise and self-judgment are wrought in me, leading to confession. And, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is impossible for a soul to enjoy peace, if the difference between sinning as an enemy of God and sinning as a child of God is not seen. One of the most miserable persons on the earth is a child of God out of communion, and having a bad conscience, through unjudged sins. The word of God makes a perfect provision for us. Unconverted, all my sins are between God and man, and I live in danger of eternal woe. As a believer in the Lord Jesus, my sins are now all forgiven—freely, fully, eternally. I am become a child of God, and I have done with sin. But "If any man sin," &c. Mark it well—"If." We ought not to; but "if" we do, what then? "Why, then you've lost everything," says Satan. But Satan is a liar, a murderer, a soul-destroyer. What saith the scripture? "*If* any man sin, we have an advocate," &c. And by the confession of sins the lost communion is restored, the

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conscience is at ease, the soul happy—and why? Because the value of the precious blood of Christ under the eyes of God on our behalf had never changed nor diminished in its value for a single moment. And on the ground of Christ's finished and perfect work God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," when we confess them to Him.

We find, then, two things clearly taught in the imperishable word of God. Firstly, when I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ I am eternally forgiven, and saved to sin no more. Secondly, if I sin after I am forgiven, I lose my communion and joy, which can only be restored through the advocacy of Christ, and by the confession of sins. So long as we mix these two things together in our minds, how is it possible to enjoy peace?

There are other truths connected with forgiveness, such as the governmental dealings of God, &c., but we do not refer to them here.\*

E. H. C.

\* Any desiring further light upon this subject would profit by the perusal of a little book, "*Forgiveness in Three Aspects*," by Geo. C., 1d. To be had of the publisher of this monthly.

"A CHRISTIAN is not in the flesh before God; my place—my standing—is not there at all. You say, Where is it then? Why it is *in Christ*. Salvation is the taking me out of the first Adam and putting me into the Second Man."—J. N. D.

## THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

IT is well for us that we are not left to our own opinions as to how we are to conduct ourselves after we have believed on Jesus to the saving of our souls. For, let me say unhesitatingly, no pains have been spared on the part of our blessed God to equip us thoroughly for the journey of life. Guidance for the pathway, comfort and refreshment for the road, training for His service, either in the world's great harvest-field of precious souls, or amongst His beloved saints on the earth; in short, all that is needed is abundantly furnished in the word of God. Therefore no believer, with the Bible in his hand, can honestly plead ignorance of God's mind; nor can he gainsay the fact, that God, in His infinite grace, has fully provided in that blessed book for *every emergency*.

It is needful for our souls that we learn the wholesome truth which stands at the threshold of the Christian's course, and is conveyed in that sweeping sentence, "In me (that is, *in my flesh*) dwelleth NO GOOD THING." (Rom. vii. 18.) This lays the axe at the root of the tree. Now however humbling we may find it to accept this fact as being true of ALL, we are persuaded that without it there can be no clear apprehension of



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the blessing into which we have been brought, nor can there be any distinct testimony borne to others. We must learn that the nature we inherit as children of Adam is hopelessly *bad*, and that this is as true of *a believer* as of an unconverted person. From this truth we are naturally prone to shrink; it involves too much, and shuts us up to a narrower path than we feel prepared to take.

The truth of "*the utter ruin of the first man*" is practically ignored or disbelieved by the majority of professing Christians. And may not this partly account for feebleness of testimony and the lack of spiritual energy on the part of so many of God's dear children? For until this truth is *known* and *held* in the energy of faith there will be, more or less, an endeavour to patch up, mend, renovate, or educate "*the flesh*," upon which God has pronounced the sentence of death (Rom. viii. 3), and this must of necessity always result in the most humiliating failure. How sad to see so many dear, earnest Christians engaged in this fruitless and Christ-dishonouring work; for, in a certain sense, it is a denial of the completeness of the work of Christ on the cross, seeing that not only was the question of our sins—the outcome or fruit of "*the flesh*"—raised and settled (1 Peter iii. 18), but "*sin in the flesh*" itself, the root principle of evil, was dealt with also.

Our Lord Himself thus testifies, in Matthew xv. 19, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,

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murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"; and in Gal. v. 19–21, where the works of the flesh are enumerated in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22, 23, we read of seventeen different forms in which "the flesh" manifests itself. Terrible picture indeed. It is well for every believer to know the truth of this, lest he be found as, alas! so many are to-day, wasting the time in useless efforts to improve that which *God has already condemned* in the cross of Christ. Have you reached this point of deliverance in your soul's history, dear fellow-Christian? For deliverance it surely is. Have you accepted the truth, that the history of the first man was *closed for ever* at the cross of Christ, and that *every believer* is now called upon to *reckon himself* "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? (Rom. vi. 11.)

Fear not to rest your soul on the sure testimony of God's unerring Word, which declares that He has *condemned in the cross of His Son* the evil principle within you called "sin in the flesh." Your responsibility now is to keep it *in the place of death*, where God has judicially put it. This, I need hardly say, involves unsparing self-judgment and a careful walk, but it leaves you free in soul to engage yourself with the positive truths of Christianity. And now, the soul thus freed, desires to know how he may best serve the interests of

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his Deliverer. Here again we can only find a safe path for our feet as we are guided by that which is written. "Thou hast magnified THY WORD above all Thy name." (Psalm cxxxviii. 2.) Many questions present themselves to the young and inexperienced. Must I be controlled *exclusively* by the written Word? May I not avail myself of the writings and teachings of eminent Christians, and place myself under the leadership of those more advanced in the truth, and better able to interpret the scriptures than I am? Dear young fellow-believer, there is that in the word of God which ministers to *every* condition of soul, and there is no need therefore to go beyond the range of inspiration. A *full* revelation of God's mind has been given, and the Holy Ghost is down here in the world, and *indwells every believer*. And for what purpose? To take of the things of Christ, and show them to *you*, to guide *you* into ALL TRUTH. (John xvi. 13, 14.) Do you believe this? And will the Holy Spirit fail to fulfil this special mission for which He took up His abode down here? Surely not, if you are willing to be guided. Look then for the teaching of the Holy Ghost, whose delight it is to minister Christ, by *means of the written Word*, to the hearts of His own on the earth. Not that we would undervalue for a moment the help and instruction of godly Christians more advanced in the truth; nor would we overlook the blessed

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fact that Christ has given gifts to His Church "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." (Eph. iv. 11, 12.) And what is more precious and helpful to the soul than fellowship *in the Lord* with other saints? What we desire to press is this, that the individual believer never need be necessarily in doubt as to his path on earth. Gifted men *may*, and *do*, fail. Old and experienced Christians may not *always* be found with their feet in the way of truth; and many who "did run well" have turned aside. Where therefore can we direct you, dear believer, but to the unchanged and unchangeable word of God, to the precious, imperishable Scriptures of truth, which God has graciously placed at *your* disposal for your help, comfort, and guidance? May you be found under the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, feeding in their rich pastures, and growing in acquaintance with that blessed One around whom the whole volume of inspiration clusters. We commend you, dear Christian reader, "to God, and to the *word* of *His* grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts xx. 32.) "*All Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.)

G. F. E.

## “THE HORN OF SALVATION.”

IN the first three chapters of Luke—those chapters which give us the introduction to his gospel, and which furnish too the introduction of the Son of man into our midst—there are mentioned seven places, around which cluster events of rare interest.

First we have, in chapter i. 9, *The temple of the Lord*, into which Zacharias the priest had gone, in the order of his course and in fulfilment of his office, to burn incense. There appeared to him an angel of the Lord, who informed him that his prayer had been heard, and that his wife Elizabeth should have a son. Long years of prayer for this very favour had passed fruitlessly away. Zacharias was now old, and Elizabeth “well stricken in years.” Nature had well-nigh run its course, and hope had doubtless faded. But these prayers were now to be answered.

The angelic messenger announces the birth of a son, supplies his name, John—“Beloved of Jehovah”—states his character, and shows that he is the forerunner of the Lord.

Zacharias is incredulous. His hopes are bounded, after all, by the capabilities of nature, so that his unbelief has to be rebuked,

and he stricken dumb until the birth of the child.

Now, all this indicates the interposition of God. He is accomplishing His purposes, and deigns to use means for that end. He has His way in the sea. None can say unto Him, "What doest Thou?"

The vessel for this communication—a vessel spoken of as blameless in verse 6, but unequal, alas! to the occasion—was this simple but pious priest Zacharias. He and his wife were faithful to God, and walked uprightly before Him, and hence the honour conferred upon them. And well it is thus to walk, even though occasions arise when unbelief may assert itself and we be put to shame. Better surely to be stricken dumb whilst receiving a grace-given John than retain speech, and fail such a gift! Still better, through grace, to have both speech and son—to walk in a faith that is equal to the occasion. Yet who has not failed when some such occasion arrived—who but *One*? The promise was at last fulfilled; and amid scenes of joy there was born to Zacharias the herald and immediate precursor of the Lord. Such a birth caused widespread interest; and the child grew, and was strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel.

But an event far more portentous was to be enacted elsewhere. There was sent from God to

*a city of Galilee* (chapter i. 16), called Nazareth, the angel who had announced to Zacharias the birth of John, with tidings to a virgin named Mary, that she should conceive and bring forth a son, and should call His name Jesus. Wonderful tidings these! If the birth of John were miraculous, this still more so. This was to be "the Son of the Highest," and that "holy thing" born of her should be called "the Son of God."

What was there in Nazareth and what in Mary that led the angel there? The city was small, obscure, and belonging to Galilee. The virgin was unknown, and, as she says, "of low degree." (Verse 52.) There was no proportion between the place, the person, and the promise; but then we must remember that grace is not beholden to anything here; and He whose advent is now announced comes to lowly circumstances and to contrite and humble hearts. He did not despise the virgin's womb.

To Mary the whole thing was supernatural. She could but say, in a faith that gives her a character as a true-hearted and dependent saint, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to Thy word" (verse 38); and the angel departed from her. She thus absolutely places herself in the hands of God to be His honoured vessel for the incarnation, and coming in flesh of "that holy thing," "Son of the Highest" and "Son of God."

Losing no time, Mary arises and goes to see her cousin Elizabeth. She comes to a *city of Juda* (chapter i. 39) in the hill country, some distance probably from Jerusalem. The home of Zacharias was there, and thither hastened the virgin, with heart surcharged, to learn from her kinswoman the secret of her joy, as furnished to herself by the angel.

But hardly had Mary's salutation broken on Elizabeth's ear than "the babe leaped in her womb, and she was filled with the Holy Ghost."

The recognition and response were immediate. God brought it about. Elizabeth at once acknowledges in Mary the mother of her Lord, and pronounces her "blessed among women."

The soul of the virgin then bursts forth in deep and grateful praise, admitting her low degree and the mercy of God her Saviour towards her.

Mary remains in the city of Juda three months, and then returns to Nazareth.

Then John is born of Elizabeth; and at his birth the tongue of his father is loosened, who pours out his soul in the worship of God. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he says, "for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David." That horn of salvation was the yet unborn child of Mary, thus announced by a vessel now filled with the Holy



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Ghost, who occupies so large a place in all these scenes and circumstances! How distinct is the intervention of God!

"And thou, child," referring to John, "shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: . . . to give knowledge of salvation . . . to give light . . . to guide our feet into the way of peace," are the closing words of this aged servant of the Lord. It is interesting to notice, that of the twelve verses that engage his prophecy, eight are devoted to Him whom he calls the horn of salvation, and only four to his own child, the prophet of the Highest! But when the Holy Ghost speaks He ever glorifies the Lord Jesus as His brightest theme.

In the beginning of Luke ii. we find ourselves in *the city of David*, that is Bethlehem, to witness the most wonderful event of all—the coming in flesh of Him who is presented to us in Scripture as the eternal Son of God, ever dwelling in the Father's bosom; creating and upholding all things, but now in lowly and lovely grace becoming man. His parents being brought to Bethlehem by an imperial order for the enrolling of the whole Roman world, the Scripture is fulfilled that Christ should there be born. But, despite His personal glory, room could not be found for Him in the inn. He was "laid in a manger"—a lowly birth-place indeed for One of such consequence, but an indication of the deeper humiliation to which His

grace would descend. Shepherds, as they prosecute their nightly toil, are apprised by angelic ministry of the glorious occurrence. To them are made known the tidings of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good pleasure in men," tidings that are proclaimed by heavenly hosts who rejoice over the birth that day in Bethlehem of a Saviour, Christ the Lord. All heaven is vocal; it is resonant with joy. Never such an event before. This birth stands pre-eminent and alone. Impelled by a holy curiosity, these humble shepherds come to Bethlehem to verify the news. They find out as described by the angel, make known the saying which was told them concerning this Child, and return glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

Well it is, beloved, to linger in reverie over this charming event. Not despising the manger, and yet the object of surpassing interest to heavenly hosts, we find our precious Saviour here entering our world of sin as a man. He, the woman's seed, was to bruise the head of the serpent, was to be made sin when in death He bore its awful curse, in order not only to save perfectly all His people, but to furnish the ground for "glory in the highest to God, peace on earth, and good pleasure in men."

A wonderful Man truly who could accomplish so much; but this is He, that "holy thing" born of the virgin, and called "the Son of God"; and

it is at Bethlehem that the veil is first drawn aside so that He may be shown to us in the beauty of His grace.

Eight days elapse, and we now find ourselves again in *the temple* (v. 27), whither the child is brought for the fulfilment of the custom of the law, and to offer a sacrifice—a pair of turtle doves and two young pigeons. All this is in perfect moral order, but it demonstrates two things, the poverty of the parents, and the fact that the word "immaculate" did not attach, in the mind of the virgin, to her conception. Nay, where that properly attached was to the "holy thing" born of her. And now the Holy Ghost, still diligent in His blessed testimony, leads Simeon into the temple, who at once, under divine tuition, takes the babe in his arms, recognises in Him God's salvation, and declares himself ready now to depart in peace, whilst the aged and godly Anna, coming just then into the same place, renders thanks to the Lord, and speaks of Him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Thus seal after seal is put upon this wondrous child. God initiates them all.

Again we return to *Nazareth* (v. 39), that *city of Galilee* where Mary had her home, and where now the child grows and waxes strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God is upon Him. So much are we told, but no more, concerning the early days of our Lord at Nazareth.

No room is left for speculation. Notice, however, that He was "filled with wisdom"; and, further still, that grace, the grace of God, was upon Him. These two facts are significant.

Then at the age of twelve He goes to Jerusalem to keep with His parents the Feast of the Passover. That over, He is lost for the time to them, who eventually find Him in the temple amid the doctors, hearing and asking them questions, not teaching them indeed, but showing by His understanding and answers that He was truly "filled with wisdom."

Rebuked by His mother for anxiety caused on His account, He replied to her, and this is His first recorded sentence, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" But they understood not the saying. No; for He announced His enjoyment of a relationship of which they were necessarily ignorant. But "the grace of God was upon Him." He could speak of God as His Father, just as, redemption accomplished, He instructed Mary of Magdala to communicate the knowledge of the same relationship to His disciples, "His Father and their Father." (See John xx. 17.) Blessed redemption!

Then He went down with them to Nazareth and was "subject unto them." Yes, "subject unto them." Words of deep and mighty import. The recognition of and subjection to parental authority has been thus wondrously dignified.

He whose word, in 2 Timothy iii., condemns disobedience to parents, here sets the perfect example of the opposite. May each young reader pause and contemplate this exquisite conduct. The lowly grace at Bethlehem is only enhanced at Nazareth. The childhood of Jesus is thus no less a model for His people than is His manhood.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (v. 52.) "He increased in wisdom." Does this present any difficulty? Certainly no more than that "He was filled with wisdom." Both are true, and true of the same complex person who was God and man in one,—truly God, but as truly man, whether in infancy, childhood, or maturity, and always consistent with the features and characteristics of each stage of human life.

And now lastly at *Jordan* (chap. iii.) we find John in the earnest course of his ministry, baptising and preaching the advent of One mightier than he. "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." (vv. 21, 22.)

This threefold attestation marks Him off in absolute distinction from all beside. The heavens opened upon Him, the Holy Ghost descended

upon Him, and the Father's voice addressed Him as Son, beloved and well pleasing. In all this He stood alone. Now He bore the seal and stamp of God's approval. Wondrous scene! It is the introduction here of the Son of God. He enters publicly this world of sin and Satan's power, bearing heavenly insignia and divine credentials, to be the witness of God, and the Saviour of sinners, to give eternal effect, in its own proper time, to the glad announcement of the heavenly hosts of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good pleasure in men," as well, surely, as to fulfil the prophecy of Zacharias that the Lord God had raised up an Horn of salvation for us.

God glorified, sinners saved, universal peace and pleasure in men, flow from the coming and dying of the blessed Horn of salvation.

J. W. S.

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**He is enough.**—"Have you ever seen the world a bleak barren desert, and you yourself left alone in it like a solitary tree? And could you then say, Well, there is One who sits on the throne, and He is enough for me, though all else has withered? I make Him my object; and as I cannot yet depart to be with Him, I shall try so to win Him while I am on the earth that I may be as truly with Him in spirit, and as truly see Him by faith, as if I were gone to Him."—J. B. S.

## PEACE IN BELIEVING.

**M**<sup>Y</sup> DEAR —,—,—Whilst I have to complain with you that I do not realise the presence of the Lord so much as I would desire, I find it difficult to sympathise with you in your doubts as to your having “an interest in His love, and an assurance that your sins are blotted out by His blood.” Forgive me, dear —,—, for telling you that I cannot but recognise in this the working of unbelief, and even self-righteousness, which leads you to seek in yourself a qualification for the Saviour’s love. As for myself, be assured that I find no reason, when I look within, why my Saviour should love me. But when I look away from myself, and fix my gaze on Him who is Love (though He is Light as well), and hear Him say to the poor sinner, in the 7th of Luke, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace,” I cannot but accept His word as applicable to myself, in spite of all my shortcomings.

1 John i. 9 is, I think, a passage full of comfort, whether it be a question of our sins in general, or of some individual sin. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just” (not merciful only) “to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Thus, not only is the love

of the Saviour's heart an assurance of His love to me, but this passage assures me that—Christ having died and borne my sins in His own body on the tree—a foundation is laid in the cross on which God can stand and forgive the chief of sinners, His very faithfulness and righteousness securing the pardon of the one who has believed in Jesus and has confessed his sins to Him. Thus the enemy cannot lay anything to his charge, seeing “it is God that justifieth”; for

“Though the restless foe accuses,  
Sins recounting like a flood,  
Every charge our God refuses  
Christ has answered with His blood.”

In the course of my scripture-reading yesterday I lighted upon a passage which is not noticed in the excellent paper on “Doubts and Fears” in the October number of *Simple Testimony* which I sent you. This is John xvii. 3: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” Here there is no reference to the walk. There may be a deep consciousness of failure in thought, word, and deed; but if right thoughts and a true knowledge of the Father and the Son are entertained, these are a proof of the presence of eternal life in the soul. This is easily explained. Satan has continued to the present day to act as he did in Paradise; *i.e.*, to persuade man that God is not his friend



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but his enemy. Thus the adversary has blinded the eyes of the unbeliever. But when "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness," hath shined into the heart, the darkness which has so long brooded there is dispelled, and the heart at the same moment is "reconciled to God by the death of His Son," that death revealing that He is love. Thus the knowledge of the Father and of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, is communicated, and with that "eternal life."

J. H. S.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

UNHAPPY A——.—It is related of a celebrated astronomer that on one occasion he ventured to look at the sun through his telescope, and the effect on his eye was such that for days he saw nothing but the sun look which way he would. So you have allowed the eye of your mind to rest so long upon yourself in various connections that, no matter where you look, self, self, self fills the vision of your soul. It is true the self you see is *bad* self, but if the bad could give place to the *good*, still it would be self, and, believe me, good self is a very poor source of comfort for troubled A——, or for any other anxious heart.

You ask what coming to Jesus means. It means your personally having to do with Him—a sinner kneeling at the feet of the Saviour, saying—

"Just as I am, without one plea,  
But that Thy blood was shed for me,  
And that thou bidd'st me come to Thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come!"

To this you will probably reply that you have often knelt there and cried to God to save you; but you do not know that your cry has been heard, for you have risen from your knees in just the same state as when you went to them. That may be so, but where was your faith? And what did you look for? Were you expecting the joyful assurance of your salvation to take possession of your mind while you were in the attitude of prayer? Did you suppose the hoped-for answer would come in the shape of a sudden change of feeling? No doubt God is supreme, and in the exercise of His sovereign pleasure He can deliver the spiritually-distressed in any way He pleases. Many a one while kneeling before Him has experienced immediate relief through some precious passage of scripture being brought home in power to the heart. But the most blessed words that can be found in any part of God's holy book will neither give light, nor joy, nor peace unless believed.

And surely in coming to God you must believe that He is. Unlike the gods of the heathen, our God is the living God, pitiful, compassionate, longsuffering, full of tender mercy, not willing that any should perish. Your groans have entered into His ear, and He is saying unto you, "Poor child of sin and sorrow, believe in Me. For your sake I spared not my own Son, for your sake He laid down His life. Why, then, should you doubt? I will heal your backsliding, I will love you freely, and I will cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Come as the prodigal came. In his poverty and wretchedness and ruin he returned to his father and was welcomed, kissed, clothed, rejoiced over, and brought as a dear child into the

father's house. Are you not that prodigal? Am I not that Father? Come then to Me, no longer mistrust My love, and in coming believe that the welcome, the kiss, the best robe, the ring, the shoes, the fatted calf, the Father's house and love, are all yours. Believe it because *I* say it, nor refuse the joy it brings because you feel not all you wish."

The fiery darts of the wicked one can only be quenched by the shield of faith. Satan will boldly say, "You are too bad for Christ. Your cry for mercy will never be listened to. Your faith is false, and for you there is no hope." He will bind you if he can with heavy chains, and shut you up in the dark dungeons of despair, and feed you with gall and wormwood and ashes all your days. But Jesus, the sinner's Saviour, whose mission on earth was to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, is saying from heaven, "Come unto Me . . . I will give you rest," and to assure your trembling soul He graciously declares that He will in no wise cast out the one who comes. Oh, believe Him when He thus speaks, rest upon His word, so faithful, true, and worthy of your confidence! Treat everything that goes against it as a lie of the devil, who, if he cannot deprive you of salvation, will do his best to rob you of the joy of it.

F. W.—Your note makes the distinction for which we plead, and clearly shows that the new birth and the sealing with the Spirit are distinct things. The former is the communication of a new life and nature, the latter is the indwelling of the Spirit. The interval between the two, be it long or short, does not affect

the argument in the least. Lazarus was called out of the grave, and loosed from his grave-clothes the same hour, but the two acts were not the same for all that.

W. N. A.—You will find it helpful to remember that the word “Church” in Scripture always means “*assembly*,” and is *never* applied to a building of wood and stone. If any aver the contrary let them show the passages which support their contention. For ourselves we are assured that no such passages can be found. Moreover, the assembly of God is but one, and Christ the alone Head of it. Assemblies in different places there were, such as Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, but these were simply the local expression of the one assembly to which every believer belonged.

As to the Psalms they are, we need not say, most precious, for they, as every other scripture, speak of Christ. But nowhere in the Psalms, nor indeed of any other part of the Old Testament, is there the revelation of the Father's name. To the New Testament we must turn for those truths that are peculiarly Christian.

Your question on the new birth and sealing with the Spirit is answered in our reply to F. W.

ENQUIRER.—We know of no rule that can be laid down for the guidance of everybody in the circumstances of which you speak. Each must walk according to the measure of light he has received, and to his own Master he stands or falls.

## THE ETERNAL SECURITY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE.

“IF you were to die now, where would you go to?” asked a Christian of a young man who came to his shop one day.

“To heaven, praise the Lord!” replied he, brightening up.

“What is your ground for saying so?”

“That Christ died for my sins, and that His blood has cleansed me from all sin,” was the unhesitating response.

“And are you trusting to Christ’s work alone for salvation?”

“Yes, to Christ’s work alone.”

“And what about the future, say twenty years, should you live so long? Shall you be saved then?”

“Yes, if I am going on then as I am now.”

“But if you are *not* going on then as you are now, what then?”

“Oh! well, if I should get away from God, and should fall into sin, and die in that state, of course I should be lost.”

“If that be so, Christ’s work alone is *not* sufficient to save you, your going on as you are now is needed as well.”

To this the young man could make no answer.

X.

His friend turned him to the Scriptures, and shewed him that Christ has obtained *eternal* redemption for the believer, and that "by one offering He hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified." (Hebrews x. 14.) He also pointed him to John x. 28, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

"Till that moment," said the young man afterwards, "I always thought that God had done His part by saving me, and that I had then by my earnestness and prayerfulness to do my part to keep saved; and, oh, what a fearful thought it was that some time I might slip away and be lost after all!"

"Then are we not to be earnest and prayerful? Have good works no place? And is there no need of watchfulness?" some reader may enquire.

Yes, indeed, we reply; but it is after we have believed and received the *eternal* forgiveness of all our sins that these things come in. Through the one offering of Himself on the cross, Jesus has obtained *eternal* redemption for us. (Heb. ix. 12.)

The Spirit of God declares that those who have believed God should be careful to maintain good works. (Titus iii. 8.) No true believer would ever deny the importance of good works, or allow for a moment that those who, through grace, have become children of God (1 John iii. 1) should ever act in a way to bring reproach upon the name of Christ.

Far be the thought. The one who knows and enjoys the true grace of God the most, is the very one who most *desires* and seeks after true holiness of life down here.

The grace of God that brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and unholy lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

It is clear from verse five of Titus iii. that salvation, and the work of the Spirit in us, are the fruit of God's sovereign mercy, and that we are justified by His grace, and not by works of righteousness which we have done.

Good works are not to give us a title to the blessed position which every true believer occupies before God, nor yet to keep us in that position, for we are kept by the power of God through faith. (1 Peter i.). They are the witnesses here before the world, of whose we are and whom we serve. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." They shew to others, what God already sees and knows, that His word has been believed in the heart and has taken root there. Apart from this, what man may call "good works" God calls "dead works."

Whatever the outward conduct may be, or however correct the doctrines held, unless the persons in question are "born of God" there is no true living link with Christ in glory. Such are not His sheep, nor have they eternal life. He

gives unto His sheep "eternal life," their hearts are purified by faith, and through His sustaining grace they do go on to the end, for none can pluck them out of His hand.

For such, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. The Holy Spirit dwells in them as the power of the new life they possess, and He leads their hearts into the present enjoyment of things divine. If such do fall (as, alas! they may at any moment through unwatchfulness) the Spirit is grieved, and they are miserable; but they are like sheep in a ditch, and not like the sow wallowing in the mire. They may be left for a while to learn the need of watchfulness, prayer, and distrust of self, and to learn too what a bitter thing it is for one redeemed by the precious blood of Christ to indulge the flesh; but when all this is learnt the Shepherd restores their souls and leads them again in the paths of righteousness. Nothing can separate "His own" from His love; in proof of which see John xiii. 1, and Romans viii. 34 to end.

"Safe in Christ, the weakest child  
 Stands in all God's favour;  
 All in Christ are reconciled  
 Through that only Saviour.  
 Safe in Christ! safe in Christ!  
 He's their glory ever;  
 None can pluck them from His hand,  
 They shall perish never."

S. M. A.



## PRAYER IN THE PRAYER MEETING.

(A WORD TO YOUNG MEN.)

WE were thinking over, not so very long ago, the subject of public prayer. In the course of our meditations it occurred to us to place our watch upon the table while we read aloud the longest prayer recorded in the Bible. Slowly and reverently we read it, just as a man would pray to God, and found the holy exercise was ended in less than eight short minutes.

What induced us to do this was the complaints to which we have been obliged at times to listen respecting the long prayers often heard at the prayer meeting. These complaints, we are bound to say, were generally very tenderly uttered. They came not from querulous spirits, satisfied with nothing, but from dear, gracious, long-suffering souls, whose sincere regard for the offending brother was beyond dispute.

Indeed it often happens that those who trespass most in this particular thing are in themselves very dear and worthy persons. Hence the difficulty in saying a word to them upon the subject. Of course we hardly expect such to be among the readers of so elementary a magazine as this. They feed in other pastures more suited to their growth. But had we only their ear for one brief moment, and were suffered

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to say a word on so delicate a matter, what would we not say in all affection and brotherly love? Such an opportunity, however, we cannot hope to have, so confine ourselves to the younger men, whose voices we shall often hope to hear in our meetings for prayer. To such we would say, *Remember, the longest public prayer in the Bible only takes eight minutes to utter!*

The younger brethren, I know, are not in danger of praying long in public just directly. But time flies. At present they are simple—may God ever keep them so—and their grasp of truth is hardly of that kind that lays them open to the snare of rehearsing in public prayer, much that might be happily said were anyone addressing men in exhortation or teaching. But in prayer we speak to God, not to men. Now it is written in the Scriptures, “Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” (Eccles. v. 2.)

It is a great matter to be *definite* in prayer, and in order to that we should know what we are going to pray about before we kneel down and say “*Let us pray.*” One thing, perhaps two, should be distinctly on the mind—things about which you believe the Lord would have you lead those present in prayer. Pray about them by all means, and then stop. Do not be afraid of

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praying short; your doing so will never be complained of, and moreover it will be a fine example to others. It has sometimes been our lot to hear a brother in the opening prayer pray for every conceivable thing under the sun. He has sailed from China to Peru and back again, and touched upon almost every truth from Genesis to Revelation. Do you wonder when the good man had done that everybody felt there was nothing more to pray for, and that we might as well rise from our knees and hasten home? Dear young men, I beseech you beware of falling into that ditch.

Praying for things at haphazard is but poor business at the best. Here comes a troop of children into the presence of their father. Their avowed object is to ask certain things of him, though actually they feel the need of nothing in particular. One undertakes to be the mouthpiece of the rest. He begins to speak of something, and imagines that other things will come into his mind as the moments fly. Is it a matter of surprise that the whole proceeding is a very lame affair? Whereas, had there been definite requests to make he might have made them in a simple, childlike way, going straight to the point without a multitude of empty words.

Moreover, the one who prays aloud in the meeting for prayer, prays not for himself alone. He professes to be the mouthpiece of others, and if his prayer be in the Spirit the others will be able to say "Amen" with all their heart. There

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is a tendency, alas! for our "amen" to degenerate into a mere formality, and when it does the long, indefinite prayers have much to do with it. How can we follow those who make them in their long excursions? The mind grows weary, and if the lips murmur "Amen" at the finish, many, if challenged, no doubt would find it hard to tell to what they had added their "So let it be." But they are not without excuse.

If at the close of an earnest gospel address there should be an "after meeting" for prayer and conversation with anxious souls, see to it that in your prayer you keep fully before you the object of the meeting. It is certainly well to pray for widow X—— and brother Z——, but there is a time for everything. If you are in sympathy with your surroundings, the burden of your cry will be—Souls and their salvation.

Only one word more. When you lead others in prayer speak so that those you lead can hear. I know that nothing is much more distressing than to listen to a man praying at the top of his voice. It reminds one of the prophets of Baal on mount Carmel. On the other hand, words spoken in public prayer should be distinctly spoken. See that yours are, and many will thank you for it. Most likely some whom you are leading hear not so well as once they did. Have pity on their infirmity, and so speak that they too may add their intelligent "Amen" to your petitions. Let all things, dearly beloved, be done unto edifying.

“YOUR FATHER KNOWETH.”

PRECIOUS thought, My Father knoweth,  
     In His love I rest ;  
 For whate'er my Father doeth  
     Must be always best.  
 Well I know the Heart that planneth  
     Nought but good for me,  
 Joy and sorrow interwoven,  
     Love in all I see.

Precious thought, My Father knoweth,  
     Careth for His child ;  
 Bids me nestle closer to Him  
     When the storms beat wild.  
 Though my earthly hopes are shattered,  
     And the tear-drops fall,  
 Yet He is Himself my solace ;  
     Yea, my “all in all.”

Sweet to tell Him all He knoweth,  
     Roll on Him the care,  
 Cast upon Himself the burden  
     That I cannot bear ;  
 Then, without a care oppressing,  
     Simply to lie still,  
 Giving thanks to Him for all things,  
     Since it is His will.

Oh to trust Him then more fully !  
     Just to simply move  
 In the conscious calm enjoyment  
     Of the Father's love,  
 Knowing that life's chequered pathway  
     Leadeth to His rest,  
 Satisfied the way He taketh  
     Must be always best.

L. W.  
*Selected.*

## LAODICEA.

REV. ii. iii.

IN these addresses, given by our Lord, through the apostle John, to the seven Asiatic assemblies, we have a brief but deeply important and suggestive sketch of the history of the professing church, from the apostle's day unto the coming of the Lord.

Although addressed primarily to assemblies actually then existing, yet the Lord's design in them is evidently to furnish the saints of all days with a sevenfold or perfect and complete picture of the assembly of God on earth, as seen in responsibility to Christ.

If on the one hand the failure of those set in testimony for Him is here given as a beacon to warn us of the dangerous rocks and shoals upon which *they* stranded; on the other, we are encouraged and cheered by the Lord's expressed approval of those who remain faithful to Him in a time of general departure.

And not only is there much in these addresses that may apply to the individual Christian at any given moment, but there is also that which has its application more especially to the assembly in the various phases of its history on earth.

Thus the characteristic features of each assembly

are given separately, with the suited word and attitude of Christ to meet its state. Nor is it difficult to trace the analogy in the church's actual history—patent enough to all who care to enquire.

Who, for instance, can fail to see, from the writings of the apostles themselves, that even in their day the tide of evil had already set in? Ephesus had left her "first love." In Smyrna a time of deep suffering for the saints is the great feature, and we are carried back to the fierce persecutions which raged against the Christians in the days of the early heathen emperors. In Pergamos, the third phase, where the church has lost her heavenly character, and is dwelling "where Satan's seat is," we find that which has its parallel in the days of Constantine, who adopted the Christian profession, and became its chief patron and supporter. Popularized Christianity was the result; the church and the world shook hands.

In Thyatira popery is in the ascendant; the period of the middle or "dark ages," as they have been well called, when in remote corners of the earth a persecuted remnant were found cleaving to the Lord. The main features of Thyatira, as well as those of the three which follow, may be traced down to the end.

Sardis, having a name to live but dead, may represent that which Protestantism has merged

into since the Reformation ; a correct and orthodox exterior, but destitute in the main of spiritual life and energy.

Philadelphia, a feeble remnant who have the Lord's distinct approval in a day of widespread declension.

Laodicea, the last phase of the church's history as a witness for Christ on the earth, "neither hot nor cold," nauseous to Christ, and a striking contrast to Philadelphia.

Here then we are brought face to face with the present actual condition of that which was set up in divine power on the earth at Pentecost.

And where are we, dear Christian reader? Can we doubt for a moment, as we look at that which calls itself by the name of Christ, that we are in the "last days" of the church's earthly history? The characteristic features of Laodicea are everywhere present. For what is Laodicea? a moral condition described by the Lord Himself as that which should mark Christendom at the close of the present period. We only need to refer to Scripture to be convinced that the main elements of Laodicea are all around us to-day. (See 2 Tim. iii.; 2 Peter ii.; 1 John ii. 18, 19; Jude 4-19.)

It is important to take note of the way the Lord presents Himself, first of all to the churches as a whole, and then to each assembly separately.

In chapter i. 13-16 He is seen in judicial glory



as Son of man, discriminating in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

We do not get here, as in Ephesians and elsewhere, the assembly viewed as the body of Christ, but rather in its house aspect, as Christ's corporate witness on the earth, consequently the attitude He assumes is one of comparative distance.

There is nothing, however, in this to stumble or to alarm the feeblest member of the body of Christ; but holiness must be maintained at all cost if there is to be a true testimony for Him. (Psalm xciii. 5; Eph. i. 4; Col. i. 22; 2 Tim. i. 9; 1 Peter i. 15.) Need we say that this is true of the *individual Christian* as well as of the assembly of which he forms a part? Surely every faithful heart may trace in this the holy jealousy of the Lord's love that cannot tolerate in His saints anything that would be unsuitable to Himself.

You will further notice that Christ presents Himself in a significant way to each assembly, and it may be said that the condition of each defines His attitude towards it.

This is of the utmost moment to us.

There is no question that God's thought in Christianity is that the assembly as a whole should be an expression of Christ on the earth, and that each local assembly should correspondingly be an expression of the whole.

This can only be brought about and maintained as there is individual exercise before God, and

energy of faith in Him. If we are to be suitable to God collectively, we must first be right individually. But what are the actual facts, beloved? Where is the oneness that ought to characterize the church of Christ on earth? Where can we look for a true expression of that which was set up at Pentecost in all its freshness and beauty? Alas, like all else entrusted to man's responsibility, it has become in *his* hands a hopeless failure.

Thank God, this is only one side of the picture. There is another and blessed side of it—another Builder, whose work will never fail. “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.” (Eph. ii. 21.) All honour to His peerless name!

If such then is the condition of Christendom to-day, what does it tell us? That Laodicea is here. Laodicea! Ominous name! What does it mean? “Rights of the people.” How significant! Is it not one of the chief characteristics of the present day that all classes of the community are clamouring and contending for their “rights”? Menacing clouds of anarchy, discontent and rebellion cover the sky; murmurs, fierce and threatening, fill the air; the foundations of society are being shaken, while the religious world plumes itself, and boasts of its well-organised machinery for the conversion of the world, and the ushering in of the millennium!

But where is Christ as to all this? “*Outside.*”

And where are we, dear fellow-Christian, for we cannot be neutral now that Laodicea is here? Laodicea or Christ, which is it? The seething mass of unreal profession is fast ripening for judgment, and will presently be spued out of His mouth. How far are *you*, how far am I, helping it on? Surely we can own with shame and confusion of face *our* share in the common ruin. But what is the remedy? for we write to stimulate and encourage every dear believer in Jesus, and we know well that no permanent result can be reached unless the truth is honestly faced. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and *repent*." Let each of us own *our* part in the general failure.

For this He rebukes and chastens. And what then? "Behold"—special attention being thus called to what follows—"I stand at the door, and knock."

Christian reader, Laodicea is here; your Lord is *outside*, and He desires your company. Does it surprise you that He should long for the fellowship of those for whom He shed His precious blood? Is it not rather a matter of the deepest wonder to you that there should be the need for such an appeal from Him? What has been your response? Has He knocked at your heart's door for months or years, and been refused admittance? Is it that personal identification with a rejected Christ will shut you up to so narrow a path that you shrink from it?

“I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of *nothing*” is the boastful language of Laodicea to-day; but mark the Lord’s solemn words—“and knowest not that thou art *wretched*, and *miserable*, and *poor*, and *blind*, and *naked*.” The condition of that which outwardly bears His name on earth has become so corrupt, that Christ can no longer own it as a witness for Him; and now, just before the stroke of judgment falls upon it, the Lord looks around for hearts faithful, true, and loyal. And so He knocks, patiently, persistently, longingly at the door of each true believer’s heart. Oh, beloved, has it indeed come to this? Yes, for Laodicea is here, and Christ addresses Himself to individuals. Shall He knock in vain? Will you, can you, remain indifferent to your Lord’s loving appeal? He opens your eyes to see what Laodicea is, and He claims your allegiance and your heart’s undivided affections for Himself. Strange that there should be the need for us to be reminded of this.

It may be you will be called upon to sever yourself from much your heart has hitherto been clinging to, because, perhaps, you have never learnt His estimate of it; but now that the crisis has come, are you prepared to give everything up, and be satisfied with Himself alone? Can you trust Him to keep you? Has He proved Himself worthy of your confidence? Do you wish to be in His company, to serve Him, to

dwell in the circle of His interests? Then open your heart's door, beloved, and bid Him welcome.

"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." "Sup with him." He will come down into your circumstances, interest Himself in all your little concerns, and shed the fragrance of His presence along your earthly pathway; for well He knows that if you walk with Him, you will get the world's "cold shoulder." But more, "And he with Me." What is this? He takes you, in spirit, out of *your* circumstances and calls you into His. What are they? Where does He delight to conduct our spirits? To the rich pastures of His living word, where the Holy Ghost discloses to our wondering view God's counsels and plans respecting us in Christ.

Dear fellow-believer, do *you* know anything of this in the history of *your* soul? Have you found Christ "Himself" enough for *you*? True, the path is narrow, the days are dark and evil, reproach and persecution are the sure accompaniments of a faithful witness for Christ in this world. But what is the compensation in the midst of it all? His smile and approval made known to the heart in the joy and intimacy of communion with Himself!

Those who would answer practically to Matt. xviii. 20, and to the truth of the "one body" (Eph.

iv. 4), must know experimentally what it is to be outside the camp with Him. (Heb. xiii. 13.)

Are you in this fellowship, dear reader? Have *you* gone out "*unto Him*"? To be neutral now is to be unfaithful to Christ.

You see a friend hurrying up the street as though coming to your door. Quickly you hasten from the window to the door, so that you may be ready to receive him, and bid him welcome—you would not keep *him* waiting a single moment. And the Lord Jesus Christ is knocking, knocking, still knocking at the door of each believer's heart. What a comfort to know that there *are* some, although their number may be small, who value the Lord's word and His name above all else.

G. F. E.

**A Solemn Sin.**—"It is an awful sin that nominal Christianity commits in making so little, as it does, of the blood of God's Son. It is either something that I know as shed for me, or something repudiated by me; and the not accepting that blood as what God has declared it to be, is one of the solemn sins of the present day. I dishonour the blood if I do not believe that it has washed my sins away, if I do not see all guilt gone, if I am not quite at peace and free in the presence of God, looking for the Eternal Lover of my soul who is coming to take me to be with Him as the One who has bought me with that blood and saved me for ever. Saved thus, the dying thief went to the paradise of God with the same liberty as Christ Himself."

G. V. W.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S JUBILEE.

“For our conversation [or citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”

PHILIPPIANS iii. 20, 21.

THE 25th chapter of the Book of Leviticus contains the instructions given by Jehovah to His earthly people Israel concerning the year of jubilee. When the nation of Israel entered the land of Canaan it was divided to their respective families by lot. Each family had its own rightful possession. They were, however, permitted to sell their inheritance, should poverty compel them; but any such sale was only on condition that it should be returned to the proper inheritor in the year of jubilee. This was a settled law.

The jubilee was commemorated every fiftieth year. The trumpet of the jubilee sounded throughout the land of Canaan, “on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement.” Those who had parted with their possessions then had them restored, and those who had sold themselves as servants were set free.

The jubilee then had distinct reference to the

nation of Israel, God's earthly people. Nevertheless it has an important moral bearing upon His heavenly people, the Church. Let us consider in what way it may be applied to Christians.

All Scripture points to Christ. So it is around Christ Himself that the great moral truths connected with the jubilee revolve. Says the apostle, "Our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Let us then view the celebration of the jubilee in connection with the Lord's coming.

He has been here once as the Sin-bearer, He is coming again to call His own away from earth to heaven. How many Christians there are who accept this as a truth found in the word of God, but who do not allow so precious a hope to have a practical bearing upon their ways and actions. Very many of God's dear people are living as though their hopes and prospects were connected with earth, the very place of Christ's rejection and death. Surely this is a solemn denial of the Christian position. No truth of God's blessed word can be accepted simply as a theory without serious damage to the soul. This was no matter of theory to the apostle Paul, who wrote the Epistle to the Philippians when shut up in the prison at Rome, but a living, bright reality. For Christ's sake he had suffered the loss of all things; but his vision was opened to the glorious inheritance above. His prospects here were blasted;



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but he longed to enter upon his portion there with Christ, who was everything to him. This was the freedom for which he looked, this the inheritance on which he expected to enter. He looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, too, every Christian should be watching and waiting for Him. When He comes then the trumpet of the Christian's Jubilee will sound.

According to the distant or near approach of the jubilee the value of property rose or fell. If the jubilee was at hand the inheritance would be of little worth to the purchaser; but if a long way off the value would be so much the greater. Herein lies an important principle. If the Lord's coming is a distant event in our minds, the things of earth will be of great importance to us; but if ours is an immediate hope (as it indeed should be) earthly possessions will be of far less value in our sight. "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not." (1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.) May this intensely practical application of the truth we have been considering be known in power by all the Lord's people; for there is but little doubt that the enemy has succeeded only too well in blinding the eyes of many.

*A true picture of the present condition of things*

is given in the well-known parable of the ten virgins, who all slumbered and slept. It is true the cry has gone forth, "Behold the Bridegroom!" and some few Christians have awakened to the fact, but the greater portion are still asleep. To such the apostle addresses himself in the following stirring language: "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 11, 12.) Surely if the Lord's coming were a present expectation to us it would cause everything to fall into its proper place. It would prove to be the means of effectual deliverance from snares into which we might otherwise fall. As might be expected, Christ Himself proves to be the true Deliverer. He is the One who has delivered us "from this present evil world." He does deliver in our pathway here. He will yet deliver these bodies of humiliation at His coming. And this is when the Christian will enter upon his proper inheritance.

T. D.

**Christ's Love a Reality.**—"If an angel from heaven were to come to my bedside, and tell me that Christ was occupied with me, as a member of His body, should I be more certain of that love than I am? It is no delusion, but a fact, that Christ loves me, and will love me right on to the end; and He will not cease making me know it till He gets me into the Father's house to be eternally in the full fruition of it."

G. V. W.

## THE PATTERN FOR US.

“**M**AN shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God,” was the Lord’s answer to Satan when he sought to beguile Him from the path of obedience and dependence upon God. But He had as Man taken the place of subjection, and to have acted apart from the word of God would have been disobedience and independence. Here, then, is the pattern for us. The word of God was His alone guide. He waited for that word, lived by it, and walked according to it. “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.”

What do we know of this, dear fellow-believer? Alas! we can but hang down our heads if we test ourselves as to it in God’s own presence. It should humble us surely as we remember how little we practically follow Christ, though professing to do so, for are we not called by His name? Oh, let us seek in fuller measure to be Christians in reality, not followers of Christ in name only; but endeavouring by God’s grace to be Christians in walk and ways, with the word of God our only guide, as it was Christ’s, for He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. (1 Peter ii. 21.)

One of old could say, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” (Jer. xv. 16.)

Job too has said, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Chap. xxiii. 12.)

In this day of boasted advancement, the word of God is accounted out of date, and even where the Bible is supposed to be the guide, man's word is listened to instead, and thus its precious teaching is often missed.

A lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path will it be to all who seek to walk according to it. "The entrance of Thy words giveth light ; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

We should search the word of God as those that seek for hidden treasure. Our ears should be open wide to the voice of God in it, and our hearts ready to receive what He has to say. Many a precious gem lies hidden there for the diligent searcher to discover. Be not like one who picks up particles of dust from a gold mine that others have left behind, but dig for yourself, dear reader, and many a nugget will you find waiting to reward your labour.

Beneath every page of Scripture Christ lies hidden, and he that seeks shall find. The diligent soul shall be made fat. May the word of God be increasingly precious to every reader, and Christ, who is its theme, be to him "the chiefest among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely."

"How sweet are Thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth !" (Psalm cxix. 103.)

E. E. N.

## ALTERING THE WORD OF GOD.

EVERY motive that could move men to alter the word of God has been fully delineated in various portions of the Bible. It shows that God was aware from the first of the reception that would be given to His truth; and it is as instructive to the humble believer as it is humiliating to the modern lover of penknife criticism.

1. The tendency to alter the word of God is *human*. It is manifested in the first religious conversation on record. The Divine voice had asserted, "Thou shalt not eat of it"; the human voice added, "Neither shall ye touch it." The addition was the precursor of the fall.

2. The desire to alter the word of God is *dangerous*. In the wilderness God Himself points this out: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it." (Deuteronomy iv. 2.) The nations they were advancing to conquer had long cast aside their allegiance to their Maker, and the least tendency to question or alter God's word might result in the same downfall for Israel. Deuteronomy xii. 31, 32 distinctly refers to this danger, and reasserts the warning, "Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." That idolatry

does result from such daring rebellion is proved by the state of the Roman Catholic community to-day.

3. The act of altering the word of God is *sinful*. "Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." (Proverbs xxx. 5, 6.) "Every word of God is pure"; and he who essays to improve upon it imputes error to the All-wise. Only unholy minds could attempt this.

4. The desire to alter the word of God is *weakness*. Jeremiah's was a terrible message, and even he might yield to feelings of pity for his race. God saw this, and in words that could not be misunderstood, He said to the prophet, "Diminish not a word." (Jeremiah xxvi. 2.) If God's message is diminished, its power is lessened, and its results are consequently less certain. The authority, the power, the meaning, the terror of God's truth must be preserved in all their fulness, if God's purposes are to be carried out.

5. The ambition to alter the word of God is *Pharisaic*. To break the perfection of the law, and teach our own alterations or additions as if they were of God, is vile indeed. (Matthew v. 19, 20.) Our Lord reproved this spirit in scathing and unmistakable language. Why is it His words are forgotten? "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition," He says, "teaching for doctrines the command-

ments of men." (Matthew xv. 6-9.) The Pharisaic spirit thus renders obedience and loyalty to God as the Supreme Teacher impossible.

6. The craving to alter the word of God is *accursed*. Revelation xxii. 18, 19 should be read with fear and trembling. Is there not a reference to this tendency as first revealed in Eden? What else is meant by the threatening, "God shall take away his part from the tree of life." (See Revised Version.) Is not the offender's name to be taken away as Adam's was? Thus all down the ages God has warned men against this crime. He is a jealous God, and has determined to visit with the direst punishment all who dare to alter His completed and full revelation.

This is the crime of the present day: the Lord preserve us from it!

SELECTED.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MARTIN.—Proverbs xxiii. 31, 32; Genesis xxvii. 28; Deut. xiv. 26. There are those who have given a good deal of attention to this subject, and who tell us there are two sorts of wine mentioned in scripture, the one harmful and the other not only harmless, but good. We do not commit ourselves to their conclusions, as we have never devoted much time to the examination of the matter; but if what they say is just, it is easy to see how these passages agree. But apart from that, it is very evident in Proverbs the warning is directed against drunkenness and gluttony, and against sins that too often accompany those horrid vices. Read the entire passage from verse 19 to the end of the

chapter. If any confound this with what is stated in Genesis and Deuteronomy, it betrays on their part a want of discernment patent to the least discerning.

E.B.—We cannot help thinking that the chief cause of your soul-trouble is that you have been looking for a better *self*, and because you have not found it your disappointment is intense, and you are almost driven to despair. A better *self* you will never find, look for it as long as you will. That which is crooked cannot be made straight, nor can a clean thing come out of an unclean. That old, wretched, good-for-nothing self God has set aside in the cross and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you hate it you do but hate that in which no good dwells, which always rises up against God, and on which His judgment rests. Foolish indeed it is ever to expect improvement there. But we trust you see what it is to be connected with the Second Man, the Last Adam. The believer shares in His life, stands on His platform, and finds himself in new associations altogether. It is now no longer a question of what I am, but of what Christ is. “As He is, so are we in this world.” (1 John iv. 17.) “As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” (1 Cor. xv. 48.)

When once you are clear as to this great change of standing—that you are no longer in Adam, but in Christ—then, I beseech you, hold fast the assurance of it, and look prayerfully to God about your daily walk. Ask Him to make plain to you that which you do as yet but imperfectly understand, and count on Him to do so in due time. Praying over difficult texts is oftener a quicker mode of getting at their meaning than puzzling your brains about them. There is no teacher like God, and He teaches to profit. Look to the Lord continually to keep you, for in yourself you have no strength, and in doing so untold blessing shall flow into your soul. We shall be so glad to hear from you again.



## FOUR FOREBODINDGS.

“**A**ND IT WAS NOW DARK.” “Dark” indeed to the disciples, for, whilst their Lord had retired to a mountain to pray, they had taken ship and had left Him! (See John vi. 15–21.)

“*Dark*” it must ever be to the soul that leaves the Lord. If His company is our heaven below, the loss of that company is practically the loss of all. The soul may sail away from Him in ten thousand forms of self-interest, and for a time light may last and circumstances favour; but ere long darkness settles down, and the sea arises by reason of a great wind, and all goes wrong. Then the folly of departing from Him, who is the source of joy and peace, is painfully discovered. Terror takes possession of the heart. An awful gap is felt, an aching void, a fearful moral distance, and the soul is tossed on a storm of despair. There is no darkness so dreadful, no anguish so keen, no sorrow so poignant as the realized absence of the Lord from the bosom that loves Him.

Then Jesus—ever true to Himself and to those He loves—draws near, walking on the sea. But the unexpected sight only terrifies. How could it be otherwise? A friendship so close may not be lightly regarded, nor restored without a struggle.

Yet above the tempest is heard His tranquilising voice, “It is I; be not afraid;” and in one

moment of supreme and welcome grace darkness and distance are destroyed, and the shore is reached. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

"AND IT WAS WINTER." (John x. 22.) Yes, "*winter!*" All was now over with Israel. They had slighted their springtime of mercy, refused the light of their summer, closed their eyes to the long lingering shadows of their autumn, and now their "*winter*" had come. Their harvest was past and their summer ended.

When we refer to chapter vii. we find their definite rejection of the Lord. In chap. viii. they discredit His words, and in chap. ix. they disallow His work. Then in chap. x. their "*winter*" has set in. "Ye are not of My sheep" was the awfully solemn indictment pronounced against them. It was all over with the nation. Grace dealt with individuals, but the nation had placed its seal upon its own condition. Oh, it is a solemn thing to allow each season of grace to slip away, for how quickly they pass! How soon life's spring and summer and autumn fade imperceptibly away and "*winter*" comes. There is no winter so desolate as that of the persistent refusal of grace. No spring can follow that winter, no sun can thaw the fetters of that eternal ice.

And if this were true of Israel it is also true of Christendom. Her long winter is coming. The Messiah refused by the Jew is the Christ rejected by the religion of to-day. Man never mends.

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Dispensations may vary ; the wicked heart, unless reached by grace, remains always the same.

“AND IT WAS NIGHT.” (John xiii. 30.) Darkness favours sin. “They that be drunken are drunken in the night.”

It was night when the traitor left the supper table in order to do the devil's work. “He then having received the sop went immediately out.” That sop, instead of acting as a deterrent, seemed to intensify the passion which had lurked in his treacherous bosom. Money—thirty pieces of silver—was the award that awaited his shameful act. Lured by lucre, and overcome by the love of money, he retires into the shades of night to betray his Lord. It was the night season of this hapless man. Sold to Satan, and steeled against all sense of honour, he perpetrated his deed of darkness when the human eye could least easily distinguish his depravity. But no bright morning ever broke on his perverse soul. Remorse there was, and a sense of infamy so intolerable that he went and hanged himself. Suicide followed his crime of betrayal, and the blood-money, so hardly earned, scorched the hand that held it.

It was an awful night for the man who had lent himself to the enemy for a work so treacherous, so diabolical !

“FOR IT WAS COLD.” (John xviii. 18.) “And the servants and officers stood there . . . and Peter stood with them.”

Beside a fire of coals, intended to disperse the

cold and shed a lustre around the court-house, these priestly officials took their stand.

A trial of unusual import proceeded inside—they remained in attendance without. The conversation turned chiefly on the character of the Prisoner, His varied deeds, His extraordinary life, His recent capture in the adjoining garden, and His probable condemnation and doom.

Peter stood with them, not with his Master. Ah! what a mistake. The fire was pleasant on so cold a night; the company, too, of these officers had perhaps some attraction. Yet, spite of them and of the fire of coals, "it was cold." Nor was it in the power of any fire of coals to make him truly warm. His heart was, alas! wrong. Evil communications had corrupted his good manners. His conduct was wrong too.

Away from Christ the disciple is always cold. No worldly warmth, nor company, nor associations, nor pleasures can compensate for His absence. Cold the heart must ever be that prefers the world to Christ. Nor did Peter become truly warm till he forsook the fireside and went out, and there wept bitterly.

These tears, so precious and so true an evidence of his discipleship, were dearly bought. Yet how different to the end of the traitor. That had remorse, this had repentance not to be repented of, a repentance that bore such lovely fruit in after years of labour and of martyrdom.

Oh! what darkness, what winter, what night, what coldness when away from Christ! The rather through grace

"In that light of life I'll walk  
Till travelling days are done."

J. W. S.

## HARD QUESTIONS.

“And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.”—1 KINGS x. 1.

GOD raised Solomon to the throne of Israel, and endowed him with wisdom and wealth beyond all others before, or since. His fame concerning the name of the Lord reached the ends of the earth. The queen of Sheba heard thereof, and she came to prove him with “hard questions.” She herself was no mean personage, and evidently thoughtful. She had probably long ruminated over the questions which exercised her mind, and, may be, consulted others in her kingdom who were reputed for wisdom, but without avail. Her questions remained unsolved. Hearing of Solomon’s fame, she determined to consult him. It was a long and wearisome journey over the desert sands of Arabia, but the difficulties in no way deterred her. Her spirit could not rest till the hard questions were solved. She came and “communed with him of *all that was in her heart*. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not anything hid from the king which he told her not.” (vv. 2, 3.)

This remarkable visit of the queen of Sheba is a picture of the Lord’s coming kingdom (Ps. lxxii.), but we bring it before our readers with a view of helping souls at the present

moment. We all dwell in a far-off country, and doubtless all who will read these lines have heard of the fame and the wisdom of *a greater than Solomon*, even the Lord Jesus, now glorified on high. (Acts ii. 33-36.) And where is the soul that has not been troubled at some time or other with hard questions? Thousands are puzzled as to their present state and their future prospect. But, alas! how many look to man for a solution of the hard questions which arise in their souls. How oft men salve their consciences with human theories or religious profession! Yet still the questions remain unanswered.

Now we know not what may be the questions that particularly trouble each of our readers, but from some little experience we know many "hard questions" which are more or less troubling souls on all hands. We will present two of them, seeking to bring before the soul the wisdom of a greater than Solomon from His own abiding word. We are assured, if troubled ones will only have to do with Him, their troubles will cease. Difficulties may be in the way, but if any come to Jesus, cost what it may, and commune with Him of all that is in the heart (there must be no reserve, *nothing is hid from Him*), He will solve all the *hard questions*, and the soul will be in peace and liberty—

1. How can man be just with God?
2. How can I know that I have eternal life?

1. *How can man be just with God?* The

answer is simple. God is "just and the justifier of him which *believeth in Jesus.*" (Rom. iii. 26.) Sin had shut us out from God, and all our efforts to put ourselves right with Him are unavailing. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. He so loved the world that He gave His Son. *Jesus died.* On the ground of that finished work, the whole judgment of sin being once and for ever borne by Jesus on the cross, God displays His justice in pardoning and justifying everyone who believes on Him. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." (Eccles. vii. 20.) "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." (Rom. iii. 12.) "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) But Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was *raised again for our justification.* Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. iv. 25, v. 1.) "Being *justified freely by His grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. iii. 24.) And "by Him all that believe *are justified from all things.*" (Acts xiii. 39.) "It is *God that justifieth.* Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33) What could be more perfect? It is all God's own work. If any reader of these lines is still casting a lingering look at self, and in anyway seeking to be just before Him, through what he is, or what he has done, cease, we entreat you, at once from such abject folly, and, just as you are, *believe in Jesus.*

God is just, and the justifier of all such. How can man be just with God? It is a hard question that has troubled many. The wisdom of a greater than Solomon is found in the answer. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save *them that believe.*" (1 Cor. i. 21.)

2. *How can I know I have eternal life?* Many tell us it is impossible this side of the grave; that it can only be known at the judgment day. Others think that a very devoted person may possibly know it on their deathbed. But what saith the Scripture? "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (1 John v. 13.) Note it well, not that ye may hope, or think, or feel, or realize, but *know* that ye *have* it. Did the Spirit of God make a mistake? Many think it is impossible to know, because *they* know it not. But they speak without the Word. God's thoughts are not as ours. Is it a "hard question" for *you*? Here is the solution. We know whom we believe. It is the simple language of faith. God says it, we believe it. We know He lies not, and we can trust His word; it abides for ever. To believe is *to have* and *to know*. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth on Me hath* everlasting life." (John vi. 47.) And, "These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the name of the Son of God; that ye may *know that*



*ye have eternal life.*" (1 John v. 13.) What could be plainer? A wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein.

Remain in the far-off country, seeking to solve this hard question through your own wisdom, or that of others, and you will remain in the dark, puzzled and unhappy. But come to Jesus, the greater than Solomon, whose wisdom is infinite, and He will meet your difficulty at once. If it has never struck you before, read 1 John, and notice all the passages where the apostle is led by the Spirit of God to employ the words, know, knoweth, knew, and knowest. We are persuaded, if you are sincere, that you will never again say, How can we know this and other divine truths referred to? "*I know*" is the language of faith. Naaman doubted till he bowed to the prophet's word, then he said, "*I know.*" (2 Kings v. 15.) Paul said, "I know whom I have believed," &c. (2 Tim. i. 12.) The poor woman, in Mark v. 33, *knew* that she was made whole. Job said, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth," &c. (Job xix. 25.) The Samaritans said, "We have heard Him ourselves, and *know,*" &c. One might cite many more cases. And it is the believer's privilege to-day *to know*. How can I know I have eternal life? *Because God says so.*

The queen of Sheba was astonished at Solomon's wisdom; and when she had seen all the wonderful things at his court, "*there was no more spirit in her.*" And she said to the king, It was a true

report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it : and, behold, the half was not told me : thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." (1 Kings x. 6, 7.) And she blessed the Lord God, made presents to the king, and departed to her own land. And we doubt not that the fame and wisdom of Solomon were soon spread far and wide in Sheba.

And, fellow-believer, we are assured that after our hard questions are solved there is nothing like the wonders connected with Christ in glory, when entered into by faith, to take the spirit out of *us*, and humble us, and bring us to a right state of soul in His blessed presence. We shall be ready to exclaim, The thousandth part hath not been told. Thus it is that we learn to be little in our own eyes, and are thankful to be privileged to offer to Him the sacrifice of worship, praise, and thanksgiving, and gladly go on our way to tell of His glories a little while in our own far-off country.

But woe to those who remain hardened in their sins, refusing to repent, and to come to Him, for He has said, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it : for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, *behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*" (Matt. xii. 42.)

E. H. C.

## “THE JOY OF THE LORD.”

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS. (REVISED.)

PHIL. iii. and iv. 4-7.

IT is a blessed thing to have an epistle in which we find the true normal experience of the Christian presented to us; and that in the life of a fellow-servant. The more we think of it, the more we shall see the wisdom of God in presenting it thus to us, and not as a matter of doctrine. For in that case, in the treachery of our hearts, we should have said, It is all very fine, but such experience is impossible in a world like this; or else that it was apostolic, or in some sort ministerial, and not within the range of ordinary Christian life. But the Spirit of God has inspired the apostle to record for us his own experience, and that not as an apostle, but simply as “the servant of Jesus Christ” (v. 1). It is simply normal Christian experience—the true, proper fruit of the grace and power of the Spirit in the Christian, humbling as it is to own it, seeing that we know so little of it, though the resources that produced it in Paul are as available to produce it in us as in him.

If there be one thing more characteristic of this blessed experience than another it is joy. The

epistle bears the stamp of it throughout. We might not, perhaps, have been prepared to find it so strongly marked here; we might have looked for it in Ephesians, where the position of the Christian is in view, and presented to us at the full height of God's eternal counsels and as the fruit of a new creation in which they are accomplished, quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. But we do not find this characteristic stamp of joy in Ephesians, but in Philippians; which deals with the path down here, running as it does through the circumstances of our daily life with the glory as the end before us—a life of divine and heavenly joy to be realized, whatever the circumstances may be—never therefore dependent on them for a moment. Nothing could have been more trying than Paul's circumstances. Suddenly arrested in all the energy of his service, thrown into prison, from whence there was no probable outlook but a martyr's death; everything going wrong in the Church—his deepest interest because it was Christ's; yet his heart is so full, he only seeks that his brethren outside the prison might share the joy his own spirit drank into so deeply. If it were to be his last word, so to speak, it is "*Finally*, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." "*In the Lord*"—there lay the spring of the joy for him and for us, a joy not found in, or dependent in any way upon,

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our circumstances, but which circumstances may be used to deepen as they shut us up to Him who is the source of the joy. How blessed to have this life of heavenly joy upon earth presented to us in this beloved servant, and to see the source and power of it in Christ known in heavenly glory as the object of the soul, "To me to *live* is *Christ*"—an object as powerful to produce it in us as in him.

It may be thought that it is a strange time to be talking of joy in these last days of the utter ruin of the Church. Those were not bright days in Nehemiah's time, when God first enunciated the principle, in His grace, that "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.) They had opened brightly with a returned remnant, seeking out the original ground of their calling. But already decline had set in, and there was grave departure. In the last days we find ourselves most surely: the principles of ruin, begun even in apostolic times, have been fearfully developed; and even in a returned remnant, once more seeking out the original ground of a very different calling, the worst failure has been manifested. Is there any ground for discouragement? There is the deepest ground for humiliation, but *no* ground for losing heart. No epistle is so full of courage as 2 Timothy, which depicts for us the ruin in which we are. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

It would appear that at this third chapter the

apostle supposed he was about to close the epistle—"Finally," &c. But the Spirit leads him to write on, and how well for us it is so. For now he takes up the various hindrances that might affect the realization of this joy on earth, not indeed to occupy us with the hindrances, but that we may know the power that carries us on in joy, in spite of every hindrance. Verse 2 is a warning, in terms purposely contemptuous, against the same phase of evil that so early corrupted the Church and dogged the apostle everywhere. They were Judaizing teachers, by whom Satan sought so early to drag down Christianity to a religion for man and this world. "Concision" is a term of reproach, indicating that which was partial, in comparison with "circumcision," which was a total cutting off, which latter term he now reserves for Christianity where alone it is realized, verse 3 being a beautiful description of the Christian position. "We are the circumcision;" that is, those who have bowed to the total cutting off of man in the cross, now that the reality of circumcision has thus come. "In whom ye also have been circumcised," &c. (Col. ii. 11.) It is not only that to faith "our old man" has been crucified with Him—that is, all we were as characterized by flesh and sin—but that we have bowed to the end of the man himself, the first man, in the death of Christ, and renounced his whole living status in this world. (See Col. ii. 20.) It is the

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complete end and setting aside, for God and for the faith of our souls, of the first man in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. This makes room for another thing, even "worship by *the Spirit of God*" (the true reading) instead of by the machinery of the flesh, or efforts, "and rejoice in Christ Jesus," which gives us the spring of the worship, the overflow of the joy going up in worship—by the Spirit as the power of it. Now that is the characteristic position of the Christian.

"No confidence in the flesh": this brings us to the first great hindrance—religious flesh; I say religious, because it is that side of the flesh that specially makes the difficulty in the experience of souls. One who is brought to God from open evil has not the same temptation to self-occupation. If he looks back at what he was it is with a shudder; but one who has successfully cultivated the flesh as Saul of Tarsus had, and gained a high position among his fellow-men by it, is in danger of a reflex eye turned back upon that which had been his pride. Now the apostle can present himself as having gone further than his fellows in this self-cultivation—his experience is briefly summed up. (*vv.* 4–6.) How earnestly religious—of the strictest sect of the Jews, he had lived a Pharisee. Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless in outward conduct; and, we learn from Acts xxiii. 1, strictly conscientious. But what was it all found

connected with? With the most determinate enmity to Christ ever expressed in man, seeking to blot out the very memory of His name from the earth. What a moment when he saw that blessed One, against whom he had been running with all the energy of his being, reveal Himself to him in a light above the brightness of the sun! What an appalling revelation of what man is at his best before God! "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ!" When his eyes were opened thus on the Lord Jesus gone up as Man in divine righteousness into the glory of God, and He became revealed to Him as his life and righteousness before that glory, what became of moral, religious, cultivated self? He counts it as refuse—"dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

You may ask, How could the apostle *look* to be found in Him? Was not Christ already the ground upon which as a believer he stood before God? Most surely He was. If it were not so he could not have looked to be found in Him in heavenly glory. But this brings before us what is the immense power of the epistle; namely, the things that are *before the heart as its object*. It is not merely that my place as a Christian there involves the renunciation of all that is of self, as having its end in the cross; but as Paul looks on into



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the everlasting glory, he desires to be found there only in Christ, in a righteousness which is of God—divine righteousness instead of the best human righteousness. This sets aside everything of that once highly cultivated self. A righteousness which is wholly, absolutely of God, and become his only by faith in Christ Jesus. Where is there a loophole now for anything of the first man? How immense the power, practically for the displacement of self in all its subtle forms, is found in having Christ *before him* as the One in whom he was looking to be found in the glory of God for ever. And thus the first great hindrance is cleared out of the way.

The next thing that comes before him as a hindrance to the realization of this life of joy is all that surrounds us in this world. We now shall see how deliverance is found from this great snare. It is still by the power of that which I make my object. (v. 10.) "That I may know him." How the heart is arrested by that word! He has just told us of the effect upon him of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." It was not merely the surrender of what had been his gain in the first flush of his joy in that wonderful revelation; but there had been the *maintained* estimate of the worthlessness of everything here, "I *count* all things but loss." The test *had come*, and he had "*suffered* the *loss* of all things,"

and was able for the sake of Christ so known to look back on all he had lost as only refuse, "and do count them but dung." What can be the meaning of it then, you say, "That I may know Him"? Who ever knew Him as Paul? It means, beloved brethren, that the knowledge of Christ is insatiable. The more we know, the more we *must* know Him. All the heart has learned to know of Him in any feeble measure is only the foundation for a deepening longing to know more of Him. Surely there comes a divine satisfying in every divinely - created longing. For "He satisfieth the longing soul." The longing desire of his soul was "That I may know Him." Does not that carry with it a divine satisfaction? It does, but only to create capacity for a deeper longing, then a deeper satisfying; and so the growth of the soul is carried on as long as we are here in these longings, with their divine satisfyings, till at last the fulness is reached in His blessed presence for ever. Do we know anything of such desire? It is a totally different thing from resting in Him as a Saviour, at peace with God by all He has brought us out of and into. We must begin there; but all the *growth* of the soul depends upon having *His* object for me as my object for myself, as we see it brought out in the apostle.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection;" that is, of the place where He has

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associated us with Him; not that peace may be more perfect, but that we may go down more fully into the path of rejection with Him here, "the fellowship of His sufferings." No such fellowship will ever be known in the eternal glory; if we have missed it now, it is missed for ever. Do we know what it is to be attracted to Him by all His grace, and by the glory of His person in this time of His rejection? There is a fellowship of His sufferings more sweet than even that of His glory. David's mighty men had no such intimacy with him in the glories of the kingdom, as when he was hunted like a partridge on the mountains. How incalculable the loss if, through unfaithfulness or lack of purpose of heart for Christ, we miss the fellowship of His sufferings which we are called to now as the richest privilege of our association with Him in this time and place of His rejection. And the apostle would stop at nothing short of being conformed unto his death. He would go the whole path with Him.

And now (v. 11) we have the key to all this in the object before him, "If any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead." (See New Trans.) Is it that the apostle is uncertain of reaching his destination? No; such a thought would be to miss the whole point of the passage. It expresses the energy with which, his eye being on the *end* of the path, he is pressing on to reach that end. The character of the way that leads there is

nothing to him. It might be painful and toilsome; a martyr's death might lie on it; he does not care. His eye and heart are wholly preoccupied with the glorious end—full resurrection conformity to the image of the Son of God. He knows that that was what he was apprehended for, and nothing short of it will satisfy the apostle. How is it with you and me? Are we resting in being saved? or pressing on with every energy of our whole being to reach what God has set before His people—what we have been saved for—to be with Christ and like Christ in heavenly glory? How complete the deliverance by such an object from the world and its things! Let Satan deck out the world in its best, there is what eclipses it totally in the One who shines before the apostle's heart here. Let him offer the finest place there ever was for man in this world; of what value would it be to one who is pressing on to be conformed to His image in glory? Nothing else will deliver us from the scene that surrounds us, but an object outside it altogether. Satan's objects are all bounded by the horizon of this world; he cannot present to us one thing outside it. The object God presents to us is absolutely outside this world. Tell me, Is to reach Christ in glory an adequate object to absorb our hearts? We little estimate the present practical power of what we make our object. We see it here in the apostle: it forms him.

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"Not as though I had already attained," &c. "Apprehend" is, according to the force of the word here, laying hold of the thing. It is not any apprehension of the mind, as we now commonly use the word; it is laying hold in actual glory of what Christ laid hold of me for. When the first arrow of conviction reached the conscience, and divine love brought in the rays of divine light that shewed us to ourselves and shone on to shew Him to us, He laid hold of us to be like Him in glory. That is what the apostle was following after. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this *one* thing I do." He had not twenty irons in the fire, as is often supposed to be desirable. Oh, for more concentration of mind on the object God has set before us! "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." What energy of *pursuit* of that which he desired. Ah! there is where we so often fail. We lack the energy of faith that will not be turned aside from the object we have desired. "Forgetting those things which are behind" will be understood in the measure in which the goal is before the soul. It does not refer to failure—we are never meant to forget that; but the past points of progress are not thought of in the earnestness of the pursuit of what is before. "Reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus." What a

deliverance from the poor things of the scene the race lies through! And the apostle sets it before us as proper normal Christian experience—not merely to be admired in Paul. "Let us, as many as be perfect." There can be no perfection of *condition* short of reaching Christ in glory. He had used the word in this sense in verse 12. Here (v. 15) the perfect are those who are in the faith of their souls in the Christian position. "Be thus minded"—have no other mind or range of object than that presented to us in the experience of this beloved servant. "And if in anything ye be otherwise minded,"—he will not let down the standard to anyone's imperfect realization of it—"God shall reveal even this unto you." The next verse would meet another tendency. Lest I should suppose it to be Christianity to go on by myself alone, and think of no one else, he encourages us to seek out what we have reached in common, and "keep rank"—"walk in the same steps"—he cannot say, "Mind the same thing" (which has no authority), for the case supposed is of those who are as yet "otherwise minded." (v. 15.) It is His will then that we should consider others, who may not have as fully got hold of the true Christian object, to lead them on to this instead of giving them up, though at last it may have to come to this. If all were formed by the object of the apostle's mind, the difficulty would not arise.

In a few closing words we have the reality of these things brought out the more by a terrible contrast. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample." And verse 19 tells its sorrowful tale of what had already come true in the profession of Christianity. For it was not over heathen he was thus weeping; nor can he say that they were enemies of Christ, for they professed to be His friends; but he says that they were enemies of the *cross* of Christ—of that which was the separative power of Christianity, bringing His death between it and man and his world, "whose end is destruction." Oh, you say, these must be mere professors: and thus our deceitful hearts would turn away the whole point of the instruction, and miss the solemn warning for ourselves. The apostle does *not* introduce the question of their souls' relationship with God. He pronounces upon their outward path—"Who mind earthly things;" that we should solemnly consider it, "whose end is destruction." We know that if a true child of God be found on that road, he will be delivered out of it before he reaches its fearful end. But let there be no weakening of the warning: minding earthly things is the road to hell. Do we then never mind earthly things? Where have our minds been to-day? Have they been reaching forth to the things that are before, as God has presented them to us? or have we been pursuing some wretched object of earth?

How needed the word! The Lord give us to open our consciences and hearts to it that we may be preserved. For this is the true effect of the warnings of scripture for those who know His grace. As I might say to my child, "If you fall over that precipice you will be dashed to pieces:" not that I mean to let it fall; but the moral effect is to make the child cling close to me. We are preserved by them.

And now in one beautiful word the Spirit sums up the Christian's position. (v. 20.) "Our conversation is in heaven." It is hardly possible to render the full force of it in English. It is "citizenship"; but that to our minds is a cold political thing; to a Greek it was everything: his citizenship came before wife, children, or any other interest in life. The Spirit can thus take up this word to bring out the fact that all that forms the Christian's life morally, in its deepest springs, is in heaven now. What a wonderful contrast for us who once belonged to earth! What a new circle and sphere of glory is this! Our new relationships, interests, objects, and hopes are found in heaven! In one far-reaching word, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour" (v. 20); so that we may reach the goal without death at all. How blessed to be found of the Lord at any moment that He comes, pressing on through every thing here in the power of an object that is His for us—even to bear His image in the glory—



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changed in the twinkling of an eye then into it; all that is mortal being swallowed up in the power of a life that is already ours in Him. There is no clashing then between this double aspect of the things that are before us: resurrection conformity to Christ in glory for which we are pressing on, instead of seeking any object this side that glory; and the hope of His coming that satisfies the affections while we wait and watch.

No wonder that the apostle can now return to his final exhortation with redoubled force. (Chap. iv. 4.) "Rejoice in the Lord *always*: again I say, Rejoice." But someone may think that the greatest hindrance of all to joy has been overlooked. What about care? One absolute word, "Be careful for nothing." "Ah!" says someone, "if you only knew my circumstances you would know that it was perfectly impossible for me to be without care." But does not He who inspired this word know every circumstance of yours, beloved brother or sister? It is God who says to you, "Be careful for nothing." And with the word He gives the resource to lift you above all that would have otherwise pressed on you for care. "In *everything*"—again how absolute—the merest trifle or what seems of the greatest concern; it is enough that it presses on you: "by prayer and supplication . . . let your requests be made known unto God." It is His will that we should press whatever it is upon Him. But I have omitted a clause, "with thanksgiving"—how important as to



the state of the soul, giving thanks, not for the answer that you expect (He has something far greater than this for you), but because you know His love; you have the only gauge and measure of it in that He has not spared His own Son, and you *know* that all is well, and can bow in thanksgiving. It is the normal expression of the Christian's confidence in the heart of God. And now comes the answer, "The peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts and minds."

It is not here the peace of Christ, "My peace," that He gave us in John xiv.—the peace of the Man who passed through my circumstances, the calm, unruffled peace of resting in the Father's love. That is given us unconditionally. This is conditional, but the condition is only that we trust God with what would bring care instead of carrying it as a burden ourselves. And it is the peace of *God*, of Him who sits on the throne where no breath of trouble ever came. He guarantees by His faithful word to put this peace, in all its wonderful character, in the heart of the one who puts his cares into God's heart. Well, you say, I cannot understand it. God has anticipated you, for He says "which passeth all understanding." You have only to confide in Him as to anything that would suggest a care, to prove the blessedness of His peace keeping your heart and "thoughts" [as it really is, often so difficult to regulate] in a way to make you a wonder to yourself and to all who know you.

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Well, beloved, in conclusion I can only put it to myself and to you, Do we know much in practical experience of this life of joy upon earth? I admit that peace is a deeper thing. God never takes the name of the God of joy, as characteristic of His relationship with us, but He does "the God of peace" continually. It is because peace depends on the work done for us, and is as stable, to the faith that rests in it, as the throne upon which the Lord Jesus sits; while joy depends so much upon our state, on the power and realization of the things in which the joy is found—Christ and His sphere of glory. Is He enough the mind and heart to fill? or are we, instead of with a mind fixed on Him, allowing ourselves to be distracted, if not actually attracted, by the thousand and one things Satan has to present to us in his sphere of the world? It is here, and now, we are tested, as to how far He is known where He is—"the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" our Lord—to satisfy and form us by heavenly objects, so as to have power to express a life of divine and heavenly joy upon earth, the most blessed testimony we can render to Him, and without which there is none. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." May it be yours and mine to realize it increasingly, allowing the sharp edge of His word and warning upon all that would obstruct and hinder it, till we enter into the fulness of it, where there will be no more to distract in His presence for ever.

J. A. T.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ENQUIRER.—We believe that children should sit with their parents on such occasions as those of which you speak. When they can be no longer regarded as children, and in their own consciences feel they cannot accept the position their parents take, then it might be different. Until that time comes their place is, in our judgment, by their parents' side.

You surely have no need to ask whether it is right to come late to any meeting to which the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is attached. Of course it is not, and it is a habit against which we should guard ourselves with the greatest jealousy. But if there are lawful hindrances it is far better to enter late than never come at all.

A. F. E.—We understand the sons of God in Genesis vi. 2 to be the same order of beings as those mentioned in Job i. 6.

W. T.—John xii. 25. Have you never heard of any who on their dying bed have looked back upon their life, and in the light of eternity declared it to be a life lost? Assured perhaps of their soul's salvation, but equally assured that their life, instead of being spent to Christ's glory, had been made to serve their own ends. They loved their life in this world, and lost it. For a man, for a Christian, to have his heart absorbed with things of earth, however fair and pleasant, is but to lose his life—it is misspent, wasted, thrown away, lost. Was not Lot's a lost life? But to hate one's life in this world is to keep it unto life eternal. Do you require an illustration of this? You cannot have a better one than is found in Philippians iii. Read the whole of the chapter, and you will find it a splendid comment on this verse in John xii., which you ask to have explained.

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“And He is the Head of the body, the church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.”—COL. i. 18.

IN this beautiful verse the Spirit of God brings before our souls in a wonderful way the person of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and some of the glories connected with what He is as man, while verses 15, 16, 17 speak to us of His Godhead glories.

The first thing a soul needs when awakened by God, and made anxious, is to know the forgiveness of sins, which we find in verse 14, “In whom we *have* redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins.*” You remember the time, dear reader, when you were anxious, and longed to know that your sins were forgiven. Then, resting on Christ’s finished work you believed God’s word, that those sins were all gone, to be remembered no more, on the ground of that precious blood being shed. Such is the 14th verse. But is that all? Ah, no! There is more than that. A believer must not stop there. We must know the One who has done so much for us. How beautifully the Spirit of God teaches us! After speaking in the 14th verse of the knowledge of forgiveness of sins, He begins to unfold all the

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glories of the Person in whom we have the forgiveness, the person of Christ Himself.

First, His Godhead glories in verses 15–17. He is the Firstborn of all creation. This does not mean Firstborn as to *time*, but, as the eldest son of a family has a right to the estate which the other children have not, so the Lord Jesus Christ has right and title to everything in God's created universe. How did He acquire that title? By the simple reason that He is the Creator. "For by Him were all things created." Wondrous truth! The Son who became man, and went to the cross for our sins, is Himself the Creator of the universe, and the One who keeps it all going. "By Him all things consist." (*v.* 17.)

Verse 18, with all these beautiful titles of the Lord, is in itself a volume of most blessed truth.

I propose to take up the titles of the Lord in the reverse order in which we find them. In our Bible it is—

"The Head of the body, the church."

"The Beginning."

"The Firstborn from the dead."

Now if we take up these titles in the opposite order—I believe it is the order in which we learn them in our own souls—they would stand as follows:

"The Firstborn from the dead."

"The Beginning."

"The Head of the body, the church."

Let us look at the first—"the Firstborn from

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the dead"—the first man that ever rose up out of death, completely victorious over it, and never to return to it again. How came He there among the dead? I believe we get so accustomed to speak of the death of Christ that we are in danger of losing the sense of what a wonderful thing it is.

Think of the Son of God, the Lord of glory, numbered with the dead! Yes. How came He there? I trust you can answer, dear reader. It was wonderful love that brought Him there for us, as we often sing—

“T was love, unbounded love to us,  
Led Him to die and suffer thus.”

Ah, yes! And the first thing to see is that the blessed, holy Son of God, who was with the Father in all eternity, became a man in order that He might accomplish the will of the Father, and fit us, through His redemption work, to share with Him all the joys of the Father's house in glory.

But we were sinners—had committed sins against a holy God; and not only so, but we have a sinful nature. Nothing that defiles can enter the holy presence of God; no one with a sinful nature can be within those gates of pearl. That evil nature which troubles you so much at times, and which you find you cannot get rid of—which perhaps has made you doubt whether you are a true believer—must be got rid of before you can enter into those heavenly courts. You must lose that sinful, corrupt nature; you cannot be in heaven with it; although as to matter of

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fact we still have sin in us here, and if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves.

We will now look at some Scriptures shewing how the blessed Lord has not only borne our sins, but has delivered us for ever from the sinful nature—delivered us from its power now, and will deliver us from its presence by-and-by in glory.

First, as to our sins. Turn to 1 Peter iii. 18. I know that a great many have never noticed that verse. "For Christ also hath once *suffered* for sins." When did He *suffer* for them? "Oh!" you say, "when He died." Have you ever thought that when the blessed Lord died His sufferings were all over? He died for our sins it is true, but this verse says He *suffered* for them. When did He suffer for our sins? Was it during His holy, spotless life here on earth? No. Was it in the garden of Gethsemane? No. It was on the cross that He suffered for sins, no doubt during those three solemn hours of darkness. As to what passed during those three hours the gospel narrative is entirely silent. It was at the close of them, at the ninth hour, the Son of God cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" God drew a curtain of darkness over the whole scene. Christ was suffering for our sins, suffering from the hand of God in atonement. If you are a believer in Christ, your sins were upon Him there, all of them, and the whole question was settled once for all. Every believer is entitled to say,



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“Thank God, the whole question of my sins has been gone into, and settled for ever between God and His Son on the cross—settled in righteousness, and God will never raise that question again for all eternity.” All the believer’s sins were borne then, not some of them, nor only those committed up to the time of conversion. No. Christ is never going to suffer again—the whole question of all our sins was settled in righteousness, once for all, and will never be raised again. God, as our Father, will take notice of every sin if you are His child, and, may be, chastise you for it, and you may lose your joy and get a bad conscience. But that is another question. If a tradesman demand payment of a bill after it has been settled he is an unrighteous man. So with God. He is too righteous to raise the question of our sins, for it has been settled on the cross once for all. Then if God will never raise the question of your sins again, do not raise it in your own mind, and doubt whether your sins are gone; for God says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Now we will turn to 2 Cor. v. 21. “He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” Do you think that is the same as the verse we have been considering in 1 Peter iii. 18—“Christ also hath once suffered for *sins*”? I think it goes far deeper. When Scripture speaks of “*sins*,” it means actions that we have done; when of “*sin*,” it is generally the root and principle of evil in us as children of Adam. This Scripture says, He was

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made *sin* for us. Have you ever seen this truth, that not only your sins, but that sinful nature, the root and principle of evil you have in you, came out before God when His blessed Son was made sin on the cross. Is it not so, that, since you have been converted, you have been finding out how much evil there is within, and have often said to yourself, "How can I be converted and have so many evil thoughts, which I hate, but cannot get rid of; it seems to me that instead of getting better I get worse"? It is not really that you get worse, for we could not be worse than we are by nature; but the more the light of God shines into your soul, the more it discovers the evil that is in you. It was there all the time, but the light shews it up. For instance, supposing a room was all shut up, and full of dust and dirt, and quite dark. Somebody comes into the room and lights a match, and, as far as can be seen by its dim light, may say, "This room looks in a very dirty state; we must have some more light." Someone then comes in and lights the gas, and now the room looks dirtier than ever. The room is not really dirtier, but the more light that comes in, the more it shows it up. In the same way, the more light you get and the more you get on in the truth, the more you will see the evil of that nature you have as a child of Adam; and having found out the evil that is in you, how wonderful to know that it all came out before God when Jesus was made sin on the cross.

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And now one more verse—Romans viii. 3. This is another verse which a great many Christians never notice. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” What did God do? I want you to notice this expression—God condemned (or judged) *sin in the flesh*. What is “sin in the flesh”? Sin in a child of Adam, the root of evil, which you and I have still got in us. God condemned it. When? When Christ was made sin. Christ bore that judgment on the cross instead of you. And what did the Lord do after that? He said, “It is finished,” bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. He died (as expressed in Romans vi. 10) “unto sin once.” Remarkable expression that! Not He died *for* sin, but He died *unto* it. He has done with it for ever, borne its judgment, died and can never come into contact with it again.

Now, dear believer, have you ever seen this, that in God’s sight, you are as clear of that sin as Christ Himself, who was made sin, and died to it? Clear of it, although as a matter of fact you still have sin in you. You have died with Him. God looks at you as if you had passed out of existence as a child of Adam. Faith believes it, although it may be against our reason or experience. We cannot reason about it, but we believe it, for God says it. We have died with

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Christ. Ah! yes; but we must not stop there. The blessed Son of God made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death. Joseph of Arimathæa comes and begs the body of Jesus, and rolls a great stone before the door of the sepulchre. The Jews make it as sure as they can, put a seal upon it. The question now is, "Can death hold Him?" If the devil could have kept the Son of God in that tomb would he not have done it? What would that mean? "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." Thank God, He is risen. He is the Firstborn from the dead—come out of death, so to speak—born into that new world of glory into which He is entered as man, truly a man, although God as well, with a spiritual body, a new kind of man altogether. He goes back into the glory of God the Firstborn from the dead.

Now we come to the second title of the blessed Lord—"Who is the Beginning." The beginning of what? Well, I think you will find a similar expression in Rev. iii. 14, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the Beginning of the creation of God.*" What creation is that? It is the new creation. The Beginning of the new creation—the Beginning of the creation of God. That is, God makes a fresh beginning in Christ risen from the dead. If He is the Firstborn from the dead He is also the Beginning. Why did God begin anew?

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Because the first creation was a fallen creation, and God had no thought of improving it, but said—so to speak—“I will have a new creation.” And Christ is called “the last *Adam*.” For just as the first Adam was the head of a fallen race in a fallen creation, so Christ is Head of a new race in a new creation, and He is called the last Adam because there will never be another head of a race.

Look at the first Adam. You see him fallen, a sinner in his sins, and lost, subject to death, and after this the judgment.

Look at the last Adam. Risen from the dead, He has left death and judgment behind Him. He has passed through it all for us, and stands before God, in His unclouded favour, in perfect acceptance and righteousness. It has often been said, that first there was an innocent man, then there was a fallen man. But now Christ is neither a fallen man, nor an innocent man, but He is a holy man. To which do you belong, to the first or the last Adam? There is no middle ground; you cannot belong to both. You must either be associated with the first, with nothing but death and judgment before you, or associated with the second—Christ risen from the dead.

But some may say, “How may I know for certain that I am associated with Christ the last Adam?” If you know you are a lost sinner, and ungodly, and have trusted in Christ for salvation,

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He is yours, and you can say with other believers, "As He is, so are we in this world." (1 John iv. 17.)

So you see the blessed Lord is the beginning of the new creation, and in God's sight and to faith, all that we were as lost children of Adam is gone through His death. He is the beginning of this new creation, where all things are of God, and it is as man that He is the beginning. So no one can grasp this blessed truth till they have seen that Christ is really a Man in the glory of God.

But as many have not got hold of this blessed truth—that Christ is really a Man in glory—let us look at one or two scriptures that speak of Him as such. In Acts i. 9, 10 we read that "when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." We can imagine them looking up stedfastly into heaven as He went up. He did not vanish suddenly out of their sight. They saw Him as He went up, slowly taken from their midst, and at last a cloud hid Him from their sight. And in Acts vii. 55 we read that Stephen, "being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." He was doing just the same as the disciples were doing in Acts i.—looking up stedfastly into heaven, but there was no cloud to hide the Lord from Stephen's view. God, so to speak, drew aside the veil, and let Stephen look at the other

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side of that cloud, and he saw Jesus in the glory of God. "I see," he said, "the heavens opened, and the Son of Man [not the 'Son of God,' although He was that, but the *Son of Man*] standing on the right hand of God." He saw the Son of Man, the Lord in glory, from this very earth. And we by faith now behold Him there, the Man Christ Jesus, but at the same time God, for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. (Col. ii. 9.)

So far we have seen Christ Himself as the risen and ascended Son of Man in the glory of God. Now we come to the first title in the verse which we have been considering. "He is the Head of the body, the church." Nobody could ever see what Christ is as the Head of the body, the church, unless he understood the other titles—the Firstborn from the dead, and the Beginning of the new creation. It does not say "Head of *a* church," but "Head of *the* church." What does Scripture mean by *the* church? Well, of course the word *church* has come to mean something very different now. One person talks about the church, and means the building. Another talks about the church, and means the congregation. Another talks about the church, and means the church spoken of in this verse, or, as it is put in Eph. i. 22, 23, "the church, which is His body." And that takes us back again to Col. i., "He is the Head of the body, the church."

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Have you ever considered this wondrous truth—Christ the Head of the body, *the* church? The apostle Paul laboured to get the children of God in his day to enter into it, as we find in Col. ii. 2, “That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God.” The mystery of God means Christ and the church. And I will just say, that the way to understand it is, not to get the head filled with it, but to have our hearts knit together in love, divine love, entered into and enjoyed by the soul, and shewn out towards the Lord’s beloved people, which involves being in a good state of soul. Then one is in such a state that the Spirit of God can unfold this wondrous mystery to our souls—Christ as Head of the body, the church, or the church which is His body; and every true believer in Christ, having the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, is a member of that body.

But how is the church, which is His body, formed? We read in 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ,” or as it should read, *the* Christ; the expression, *the* Christ, referring to Christ as Head, and all believers forming His body. The apostle takes the human body as an illustration, just as our bodies have many members, eyes, hands, feet, &c., but all are governed by one head, and all are



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united together, so also is the Christ. Then verse 13 tells us how the body of Christ is formed. It is not by one life, or by one faith, but by one *Spirit* are we all baptized into one body. It is by the Holy Ghost then that the body of Christ is formed. The same Spirit that dwells in all its fulness in the glorified Christ at God's right hand comes and dwells in you and in me, and in every believer all over the world, thus uniting us to Christ, and to one another. There is just as close a union between Christ in glory and His people as that which exists between the members of our natural bodies. Our bodies are governed by our head. We think we will go out of the room; the feet obey the thought of the head, and walk towards the door; the hands are ready to open it, all in obedience to the head. So it will be when the church is perfect in glory. One Spirit will be in Christ the Head, and in all the members. All will then obey the Head. There will be no schism in the body. So should it be now, for the union is just as real now as it will be then. If all believers were governed by Christ the Head in glory, all would think alike, and act as one, as we read in Acts iv. 32:—"The multitude of them that believed were of *one* heart and of *one* soul."

May the Spirit of God unfold to every believer the glories of our blessed Lord as unfolded in Col. i. 18—"Head of the body, the church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead."

R. F. K.

**DANIEL THE PROPHET ;**  
**OR,**  
**PURPOSE OF HEART AND PRAYER.**

CHAPS. i.—vi.

**T**HE prophet Daniel was one who devoted himself to the will of God with purpose of heart, and was enabled to overcome the greatest difficulties through faith and by means of secret prayer. He abstained from the evil which surrounded him while dwelling among an idolatrous people, and thus led the way for others of his brethren who followed his example.

The remnant of Israel was in captivity in consequence of their sins, and Daniel was one of the few that distinguished themselves from the rest by confessing their sins unto God while looking to Him for deliverance from Babylon. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." (Ps. xxx. 5.)

The time came when Providence began to smile upon this remarkable individual, whose personal appearance and rare ability secured for him a place amongst others who were chosen to stand before the king of Babylon after three years' training. And to this end a daily portion of "the

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king's meat" was appointed them, and also "of the wine which he drank." (chap. i. 8.)

Daniel no more desired earthly honour than he deserved to be cast into the lions' den. It was the glory of God he cared for, and the honour which cometh from above was that for which *he contended*. (chap. i. 17.)

There are three things which may be said of him; (1) he did *not* defile himself with the king's meat; (2) he did *not* dread the consequences of his act; (3) he did *not* lose anything by standing for God. There was one that dreaded the consequence when Daniel refused to defile himself, and that was the prince of the eunuchs, whose concern was shown in what he said. "I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink." (chap. i. 10.) To which Daniel replied by proposing the following test: "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon." (vv. 12, 13.)

Daniel had learned to be subject to the higher powers, and therefore had no intention of resisting the authority of the king; but he could not partake of that which was connected with idol worship, and offered to demons (see 1 Cor. x.), without defiling his conscience and dishonouring God. He purposed, therefore, "in his heart that he would not defile himself." (v. 8.) A person might

say, "I made up my mind I would not do such and such a thing," which might be termed "purpose of heart," and yet the resolve be merely to gratify self, or in defiance of others, whereas Daniel acted for God, and had to deny himself at the same time.

"When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Proverbs xvi. 7.) This was clearly seen in the case of Daniel. But mark, first of all, his behaviour towards the prince of the eunuchs, and the manner of his appeal when the king's meat was presented to him, "He requested . . . that he might not defile himself." (v. 8.) The following portion of scripture might be added to the example of the prophet for the encouragement of every Christian reader: "But, and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye! and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience," etc. (1 Pet. iii.) It is not only important we should be furnished with an answer when needed, but that we should be also found in a "right spirit," so as not to offend any by the manner in which we reply to their questions, and "a good conscience" is a great help in facing an adversary.

In the same verse where Daniel's purpose of

heart is declared his condition of soul is revealed. The first part proves he was *for* God by refusing to defile himself; and the last part shows he was *with* God by the spirit he manifested towards the prince of the eunuchs. Instead of sustaining a loss by standing for God, Daniel and his companions were in a better condition after living on pulse and water for ten days "than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat" (v. 15); in addition to which we read—"Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." (v. 9.) Here we see that God can when He so pleaseth make the circumstances of His people favourable towards them when they stand for Him; and if otherwise, His word declares—He "will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

Daniel's circumstances were not *always* favourable. The time came when his persistency in regard to prayer seemed likely to cost him his life; but even then he did not dread the consequence, though he knew his death-warrant was signed, and that nothing could alter "the law of the Medes and Persians."

He prayed just as frequently, and perhaps more fervently, than he did before. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and

prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime.*" (Chap. vi. 10.) By bowing thus before God he was bold before men.

Daniel was engaged in prayer when his betrayers arrested him. Into a den of lions he was cast for daring thus to pray. "And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den: and the king sealed it with his own signet." But what are stones to the living God? Could He not roll away the mightiest stone that ever was placed in His pathway? The sealed stone might be allowed to keep Daniel in, but it could not keep God's angel out!

King Darius spent the night in suspense after he had sealed the stone, and anxiously waited for daybreak, so as to visit the den. When God takes a man's sleep from him, after bringing his sin to remembrance, it is enough to cause him to say—

"Begone, vain world, delude no more!"

The apostle Paul could be happy in a *prison* with Christ and a good conscience; king Darius was in a *palace* but had neither, and was miserable in the extreme. The former spent the night in prayer and praise; the latter spent it in fasting. "Neither were instruments of musick brought before him." (v. 18.) "Then the king rose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice . . . O Daniel,

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servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have *not hurt me.*" (vv. 20-22.)

Daniel, as we have said, neither dreaded the consequences when he refused the king's meat, nor when he entered his chamber to pray after the decree had been signed; and supposing he had done so, not only would his heart have failed him, but the kindness which was shown him by the prince of the eunuchs, as well as the closed mouths of the hungry lions, would have strongly rebuked his fears.

All kinds of beasts have been tamed the Scriptures tell us (James iii. 7); but the lions to which we have referred were savage in the extreme, and ready to devour, as Daniel's enemies afterwards found out.

"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) Therefore Daniel was just as safe among lions as he would have been among sheep; and when the night of testing was passed, and the day dawned, he was ready to give an answer to the troubled king, and bear testimony to the goodness of God and his own innocency by reminding him he had "*done no hurt,*" after assuring him he had received "*no hurt*" from

the lions. The one that could say with a good conscience he had done "no hurt" was permitted to receive "no hurt." (Chap. vi. 22.) The fiercest lions that could be found refused to devour the man of prayer, who would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor did the burning fiery furnace consume his three faithful companions who refused to fall down and worship the golden image which King Nebuchadnezzar set up. Moses-like, they feared not "the wrath of the king," and the fire had no power over their bodies, "nor was an hair of their head singed." (Chap. iii. 27.)

If Daniel had been faint-hearted no doubt he would have eaten the king's meat for the sake of "keeping peace," as people say. Instead of saying "No" to the prince of the eunuchs he would have said "Yes," for fear of offending the king, and thus, by trying to be at peace with man, he would have lost the peace he enjoyed in communion with God. "The fear of man bringeth a snare;" and how apt we are to fall into it by dwelling upon what this person will say, or what some other person might do supposing we adopted such a course, how powerfully the scripture would appeal to the conscience; first, by asking, "What communion hath light with darkness?" and then in asserting its authority by saying, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, *saith the Lord*, and touch not the



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unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. vi. 14, 17, 18.)

The words "come out" may sound rather *severe*. Grace sometimes speaks *abruptly*, and at other times more *gently*; but it always speaks with *authority*. The Lord knows what is needed, and can use these two words, as a pair of spurs to a horse, at the right moment, and so give decision of heart for Himself. And when the conflict of the soul is past, and a holy calm takes the place of it, we are then free to look up and say—

"Thine, Jesus, Thine,  
No more this heart of mine  
Shall seek its joy apart from Thee,  
The world is crucified to me,  
And I am Thine."

By referring to the New Testament we find that "purpose of heart" is as much in demand now as it was in Daniel's time, and is as essential to Christians as it was to the remnant of Israel. If Babylon as a city has ceased, Babylon as a *system* has taken the place of it—a system of false religion, where evil is practised and Christianity is professed. It is just as fashionable as it is false, and will as surely fall. Therefore the word to the faithful is, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." (Rev. xviii. 4.) Mark the words "Come out"

again. When it is a question of salvation, grace sweetly says, "Come; for all things are now ready;" but when it is a question of separation, the same grace seems to speak sharply, saying, "Come out." "Come out" is equivalent to "overcome," and in order to do this there must be purpose of heart. So when Barnabas came to Antioch, he did not begin to teach the converts merely to abstain from evil, but presented a living Person for their affections to cling to, like the ivy to the oak, and the limpet to the rock. He "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." (Acts xi. 23.) If the love of Christ had a larger place in our hearts, the world would have less; and if we were cleaving to Him we should be kept from the defilement around. There would be no room for anything to come between Him and ourselves, and the victory would always be on the side of "faith," that overcomes the world. (1 John v. 4.)

As soon as Jacob was crippled, he began to cling to the One who had crippled him. He held the angel fast, and said he would not let him go. And as soon as the heart of a sinner is captivated by the Saviour's love, it becomes his joyful privilege to cling to the One that has captivated him.

"Oh that, strong in faith abiding,  
We may to the Saviour cleave!  
Nought with Him our hearts dividing,  
All for Him content to leave."

H. H.

## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A. S. (Luke xxii. 64.)—Some profound truth *may* be hidden under this statement of man's heartless mockery and the blessed Lord's meek endurance, but we confess our dull eyes fail to see it. Moreover, we shrink from fanciful interpretations, and from the practice of importing into passages mere human thoughts, which, after all, are but of doubtful value.

COLOSSIANS iv. 6. — This verse should not be separated from the preceding one. We are to walk in wisdom toward them that are *without*, making the most of our opportunities, and using them for Christ's glory and for the good of others. But our word is ever to be with grace, not lacking, however, in faithfulness Godward—a word fitly spoken according to the individual need of the one to whom we speak.

ENQUIRER.—Personally speaking, we should not hesitate to take charge of the funeral of such an one as you describe, sorrowful as it would be. It is a matter about which no rule can be laid down; for we have no authority over the consciences of others, and what one would be free to do others might not.

We cannot but regard it as a very ignoble occupation for a Christian to spend his time in solving enigmas, puzzles, and things of a kindred nature, for money prizes offered in certain public prints. It is a demoralizing practice, in which no Christian could engage without serious spiritual loss.

S. B.—The longest public prayer recorded in the Scriptures is, we believe, that of Solomon's, at the dedication of the temple, in 1 Kings viii.

B. D.—The baptism to which the Lord Jesus graciously submitted was John's baptism, and it is distinguished from Christian baptism in Acts xix. 3, 4. We are not aware of any scripture that indicates, either directly or indirectly, that an individual should be a certain age before submitting to this Christian rite.

C. S. (1 Cor. xv. 29.)—It may help in the understanding of this passage if you observe that verse 29 joins on to verse 19, and that the intervening verses are a parenthesis. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, if there be no resurrection of the dead, as some assert, why then do any, by being baptized, step into the place of those who have fallen, like soldiers, on the field of battle? Why stand in jeopardy, why expose yourself to danger, if your hope in Christ is only for earth? Thus "baptized for the dead" means *baptized to take the place of the dead*—to fill the gaps made by their removal.

A. P.—A person acting in the assembly either in teaching, exhortation, or leading in prayer or praise, should only do so under the divinely-given conviction that the Lord would have him thus to act. If so convinced, let him not hold back. The exercises of mind of which you speak are usually found with those whom the Lord is leading on in service. Take courage and go forward.

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LONDON :

A. B. ROUSE, 15 AND 16, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.